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ABSTRACT

This book describes a project, the Bede Detached Youth Work Project, that was designed to combat racism in a community in London (England). It also presents information that should be useful to community workers and activists, teachers, and others involved in antiracist work with young people. An introduction provides an overview of the project and its background, aims, and anticipated outcomes. Evidence of racist activity in the area suggested that black people were becoming easy targets for the frustrations and political impotence experienced by the local white community. Although the focus of the project was white youth, between 15 and 20 individual young people from minority backgrounds and a group of young men from Somalia also took part. With government funding, the Bede House Association began its work in the local housing estates (projects). The section "Year One: Growing Pains" describes the project's first 12 months and the challenges of program implementation. "Year Two: Successes and Setbacks" covers the project's second year, focusing on practical action and the implementation of work with young people. Two cornerstones of the effort were work with young black people to develop confidence when faced with racism and work with young people with racist attitudes and street gangs to promote antiracist ideas. "Year Three: Well, It Worked for Us" focuses on consolidation of the work and the strategies used to combat various racist ideas, including racist assumptions about immigration. The final section, "Discussion and Training Notes," suggests structured tasks and discussions that can be used for training and staff development. The illustrations include many photographs taken by project participants. Eighteen sources are suggested for further reading. (SLD)

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BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS

A Report of the Bede Anti-Racist Detached Youth Work Project

By Stella Dadzie

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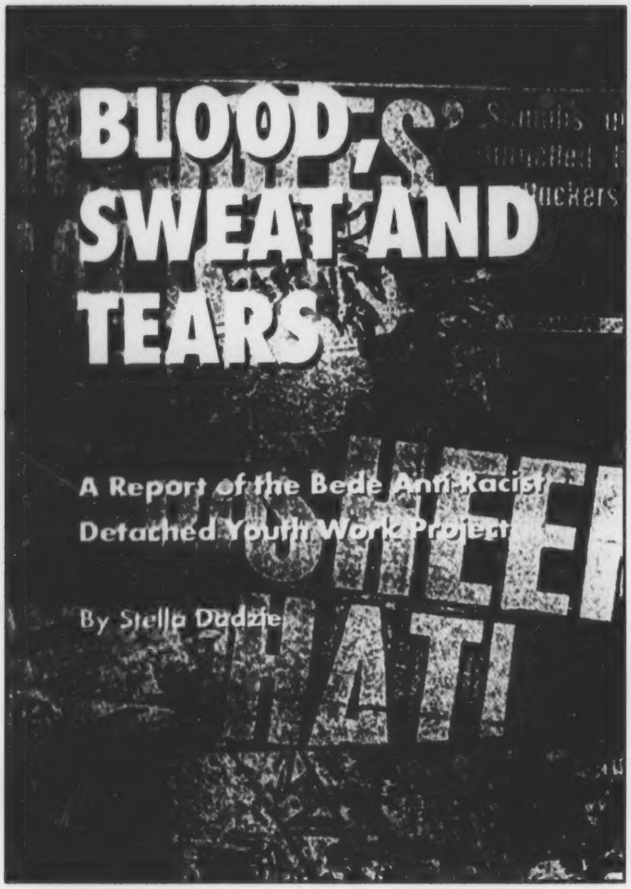

BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS

A Report of the Bede Anti-Racist Detached Youth Work Project

By Stella Dadzie

YOUTH • WORK • PRESS

This book is dedicated to
the young people of Bermondsey

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The members of the Bede Detached Youth Work Project would like to thank all those who helped to make the work of the project and this publication possible. We owe special gratitude to the many people in the local community and elsewhere who understood the importance of what we were trying to achieve and gave us their time, energy and support; to the National Youth Agency, whose decision to fund the project provided us with the means to pursue our goals; and above all, to the young people themselves, particularly those who had the courage to be different.

The names of some of the local people mentioned or quoted in the text have been changed to protect their identity.

Author's Note

Although the task of researching and writing this book was part of my contract with the project, the detached youth work approaches described are the result of a collective endeavour involving members of the detached team, the Advisory Committee and the young people themselves. Aine Woods, who coordinated the project, was central to this process. Her commitment to the rights of young people and her ability to develop an effective team were key factors in the success of the project. It was her experience of working with young people on the streets which guided the work of the detached team and her energy, commitment and positive leadership qualities that gave it direction. I am indebted to her for her help and collaboration in preparing the text, and for her consistent support, humour and encouragement.

Thanks also to Ray Barker and Santi Kamara for their ideas and enthusiasm, and to Leah Levane and Tina Stanley for their proofreading and suggestions.

About the Author

Stella Dadzie is a writer, historian and independent training consultant who specialises in race equality and anti-racist work. She is the co-author of *The Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain* (Virago, 1985) and has written a number of other publications, including *Racetracks: A Resource Pack for Tackling Racism with Young People* (LB Greenwich, 1993).

About the Project Coordinator

Aine Woods is a qualified youth worker with over 15 years' experience of working with young people. Since graduating in 1981, she has worked and managed a number of rural, urban and inner-city youth projects both in Ireland and England.

She has worked extensively with young women, homeless or abused young people and is committed to a youth work practice that promotes empowerment and equality.

Photographs

The photographs used throughout the text are the property of Bede Detached Youth Work Project. However, many of them were taken by the young people themselves, and while they cannot be individually credited, our thanks go to everyone concerned for their creative use of the camera.

Youth Work Development Grants

The aim of the Youth Work Development Grants scheme is to enable voluntary organisations to plan and undertake new pieces of work in identified priority areas. The outcome of the scheme should advance the work of the host organisation and provide examples of practice from which the wider youth work field can benefit. Funding for the 1993-96 round came from the Department for Education and Employment and the scheme was administered and managed on behalf of the Department by the National Youth Agency.

The voluntary sector has a strong tradition of innovative and experimental practice and the Bede Detached Youth Work Project is an example of the willingness to venture into new territory. Such a venture takes vision on behalf of those who identify the issue and courage and tenacity on the part of those who undertake the work. It is not simply a matter of transferring skills and experience gained in other work; it requires an ability to adapt and to develop new approaches in response to new situations.

Projects of this kind hold lessons for those who manage youth work and those involved in the face-to-face relationships. Underpinning the work is a belief in young people and in their potential for good, despite the dominant culture in which many young people grow up and the occasional act which many adults use to make general statements about young people. Successful projects need managers who are prepared to take risks while at the same time creating clear structures which define the boundaries within which the worker can act with a high degree of autonomy. Above all the work requires a mix of professionalism and personal dedication – an ability to hang in there when the going gets tough and to hold out hope for some beleaguered young men and women.

FOREWORD

When the '90s are recalled a decade from now, it is likely that the resurgence of racism on the streets and housing estates of urban Britain will feature strongly in people's collective memory.

In 1993, when our project started, the murders of Rolan Adams, Rohit Duggal and Stephen Lawrence in Greenwich and the vicious attack on Muktar Ahmed by skinheads in Tower Hamlets had already begun to focus public attention on the arbitrary racist violence of working-class white youths in southeast London. The British National Party's temporary victory in the Isle of Dogs' local elections in 1993 helped to fuel the myth that racist activity is exclusively the work of the far right in London's East End. But the attitudes and assumptions that lie behind this upsurge in racist sentiment are a far more widespread cancer, both politically and geographically.

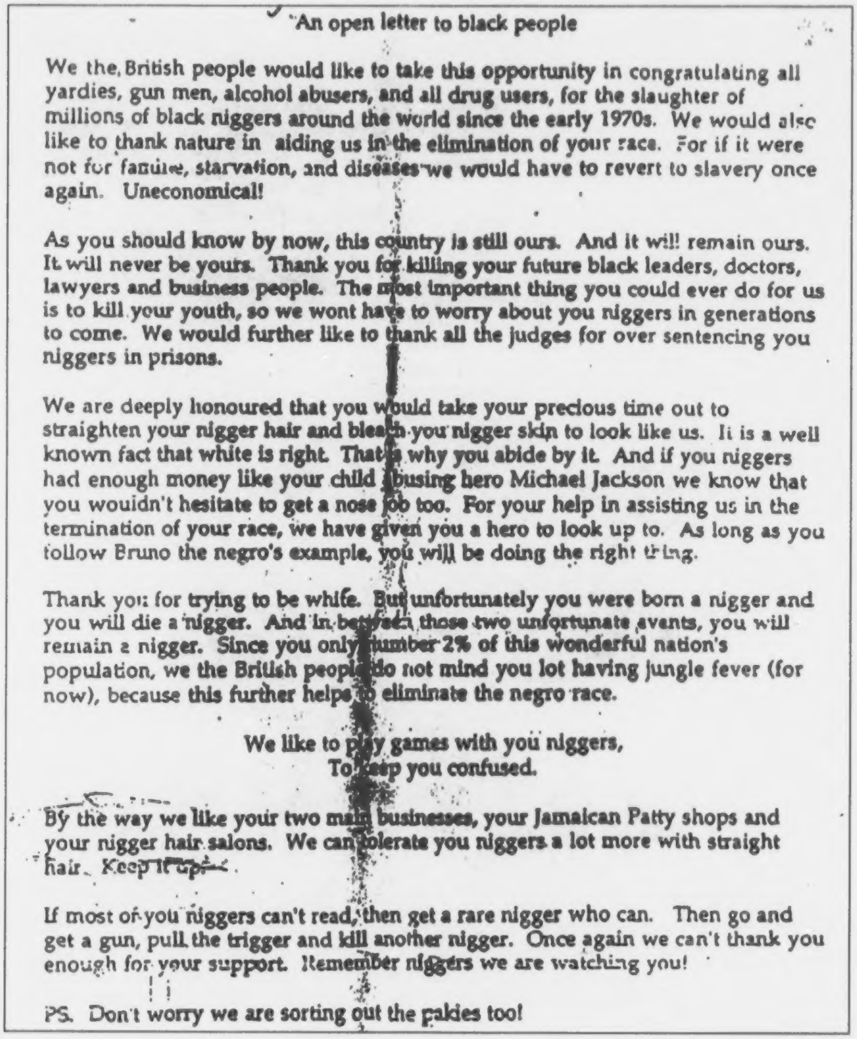
The death of Joy Gardner, a Jamaican woman, at the hands of immigration police in July 1993 was only one of the more publicised consequences of increasingly draconian immigration laws, designed to restrict the number of refugees and asylum-seekers entering the country and deny them access to housing and welfare support. Single parent mothers, typified in the media as young, black and promiscuous, have also been accused of scrounging off the welfare state and clogging up council housing waiting lists.

More recently, the allegation by Metropolitan Police Commissioner Paul Condon that black youths are disproportionately responsible for street crimes in London, has helped to confirm in many people's minds the popular national stereotype of black men as a criminal under-class. Between them, politicians and the media have blamed black people for just about every social problem in this country. It is little wonder, therefore, that individuals have become such easy scapegoats on the street.

Racial violence is nothing new, particularly during times of increased economic hardship. Nevertheless, the '90s have witnessed a marked uprise in its vehemence and frequency. In southeast London, notably Southwark, Lewisham, Peckham and Catford, the number of racial attacks rose by 36 per cent between 1990 and 1991, according to an Association of London Authorities (ALA) survey. Police records in Southwark the following year showed an increase of over 100 per cent, with the number of recorded racial incidents rising in the space of 12 months from 145 to 310.

Sadly, these figures may underestimate the true extent of the abuse since many racial incidents continue to go unreported out of a belief that nothing will be done. Those that did come to light revealed a catalogue of violence and harassment, much of which was focused on black people living and working in the local community.

It was this general scenario, and concern at the alarming increase in attacks on black people by young whites on local estates in Bermondsey, which gave rise to an application by the Bede House Association for funding for detached youth work in the area. The urgency of the work that needed to be done by the project was never in doubt. Its success and its relevance to the young people who became involved over the following three years can best be judged from the account that follows.



An open letter to black people

We the British people would like to take this opportunity in congratulating all yardies, gun men, alcohol abusers, and all drug users, for the slaughter of millions of black niggers around the world since the early 1970s. We would also like to thank nature in aiding us in the elimination of your race. For if it were not for famine, starvation, and diseases we would have to revert to slavery once again. Uneconomical!

As you should know by now, this country is still ours. And it will remain ours. It will never be yours. Thank you for killing your future black leaders, doctors, lawyers and business people. The most important thing you could ever do for us is to kill your youth, so we wont have to worry about you niggers in generations to come. We would further like to thank all the judges for over sentencing you niggers in prisons.

We are deeply honoured that you would take your precious time out to straighten your nigger hair and bleach you nigger skin to look like us. It is a well known fact that white is right. That is why you abide by it. And if you niggers had enough money like your child abusing hero Michael Jackson we know that you wouldn't hesitate to get a nose job too. For your help in assisting us in the termination of your race, we have given you a hero to look up to. As long as you follow Bruno the negro's example, you will be doing the right thing.

Thank you for trying to be white. But unfortunately you were born a nigger and you will die a nigger. And in between those two unfortunate avents, you will remain a nigger. Since you only number 2% of this wonderful nation's population, we the British people do not mind you lot having jungle fever (for now), because this further helps to eliminate the negro race.

We like to play games with you niggers,
To keep you confused.

By the way we like your two main businesses, your Jamaican Patty shops and your nigger hair salons. We can tolerate you niggers a lot more with straight hair. ~~Keep it up!~~

If most of you niggers can't read, then get a rare nigger who can. Then go and get a gun, pull the trigger and kill another nigger. Once again we can't thank you enough for your support. Remember niggers we are watching you!

PS. Don't worry we are sorting out the pakies too!

Fig. 1: Letter pushed through the door of a local black single mother in November '93

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book should be seen not just as an account of an interesting and worthwhile project, but as a practical resource that will be of particular use to community workers and activists, youth work students, trainers, teachers and others involved in anti-racist work with young people. It is structured in five parts.

Introduction

The introductory pages provide an overview of the project and an introduction to its background, aims and anticipated outcomes. The criteria for success against which the work of the project was evaluated at the end of the three years, are also listed.

Year One: Growing Pains

This section describes the project's first 12 months, giving an account of the work involved in **reconnaissance** and getting to know the local community; establishing a structure for managing the project and **agreeing priorities**; the difficulties involved in **forming the team** and appointing a stable, committed staff; how the new workers began **building bridges** with local young people; and the approaches they adopted for **recording and monitoring** their work.

Year Two: Successes and Setbacks

This section covers the project's second year, which involved **practical action and implementation** of ideas on how to approach the work. It describes how we set about **supporting and befriending** the young people we were in contact with; the issues around **challenging racism** when interacting with them on the street or taking them out on trips and outings; our efforts when **working with gangs** at targeting gang leaders as a way of influencing the attitudes of their peers; and how we went about **developing shared values and approaches** within the team to issues such as drug use, safety and behavioural boundaries.

Finding a positive way of **working with black young people** so that they would feel more confident when confronted by racists, and introducing **black staff as positive role models** who would help challenge preconceived stereotypes were both primary concerns for the team during this period. So was the need to be **working with young women**, in the hope that they would develop the confidence not only to challenge and influence the boys but also to develop their own, independent views and interests. There is an account of some of the project's **successes and setbacks**, followed by a transcript of the team's deliberations when **planning a response** to an incident involving a group of young men when the building where the team was based was besieged and racist graffiti was daubed on the door.

Year Three: Well, It Worked For Us ...

This section focuses on our **consolidation** of the work and on some of the strategies we used to achieve this. There is an account of how **day trips to France** were used to challenge racist assumptions about immigration; and of the **Maidstone Prison Scheme**, which gave the young people an opportunity to talk to prisoners and gain some first-hand insights into the possible consequences of racist violence and other anti-social behaviour. There is also a description of how the team set about **working with Somali young men** in the area when a group of them were subjected to a vicious racist attack. Concerns that our work would continue when the project ended led to discussion of **exit strategies**, including a public meeting where people in the local community were invited to involve themselves in a campaign to secure funding and premises. Finally, there was the task of **evaluating the outcomes** of the project against the success criteria that had been established at the project's outset.

Discussion and Training Notes

Extracts from the text are used in this final section to suggest a number of **structured tasks and discussions** that can be used for training and staff development purposes. These will be of particular use to people involved in the training of youth workers, as well as to others who are keen to develop positive approaches to anti-racist work in their own communities.

INTRODUCTION

This book is a record of a three-year detached youth work project that involved working closely with young people who were potential or actual perpetrators of racial violence. Based in Bermondsey, a predominantly white, working-class area, the primary targets of the Bede Detached Youth Work Project (BDYWP) were the young people living on local housing estates where levels of social and economic deprivation are high and racist attitudes are commonplace.

The project was set up in recognition of the effects on local young people of high unemployment, poor housing, reduced welfare benefits and generally inadequate youth and social services. Evidence of racist activity, including verbal abuse, physical attacks, graffiti and the attempted recruitment of young people to far right organisations like the British National Party (BNP) suggested that black people living and working in the area were becoming easy targets for the frustrations and political impotence experienced by members of the local white community [fig. 2]. White young people in the area were a particularly fertile breeding ground for extremist racist views, and were thought to be responsible for many of the racially-motivated incidents reported in the local press.

The project grew from a belief that such young people are often motivated by a misdirected anger, based on misinformation, fear and feelings of impotence about their own social and economic circumstances. By encouraging them to question their own views, confront their fears and redirect their energy into more constructive, self-empowering activities, it was hoped that the level of racist violence in the area would eventually drop. If the often quoted view that to be young, white and from Bermondsey also meant being a racist could be challenged or disproved, if only on a modest scale, the project's influence on local young people could, we believed, have positive repercussions both for them and for the wider community.

Those of us who became involved in the project, whether as workers, volunteers or members of the Advisory Committee, were under no illusion that a magic wand could be waved to achieve these results. We had no idea how many young people we would be able to reach during the project's relatively short lifetime. We also knew that challenging entrenched racist attitudes and violent or anti-social behaviour that was sanctioned by their peers – and often condoned or applauded by others in the community – would be no easy task. Apart from being risky and potentially dangerous work, there was little established good practice in the field on which to base our methodology. Others had written about the social and psychological attitudes of white young people like those we were hoping to target[1], but we

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[1] For example, see *Routes of Racism: The Social Basis of Racist Action* (Centre for Multicultural Education with the London Borough of Greenwich, Trentham Books, 1996)

Evidence of racist activity, including verbal abuse, physical attacks, graffiti and the attempted recruitment of young people to far right organisations like the British National Party (BNP) suggested that black people living and working in the area were becoming easy targets for the frustrations and political impotence experienced by members of the local white community as shown below.

1. Graffiti (NF/BNP/KKK/'WOGS GO HOME'/'KILL WOGS', 'NIGGERS OUT', 'BLACK CUNTS GO HOME').
2. 'VOTE BNP' and 'RIGHTS FOR WHITES' stickers on many walls, lamp posts, fences, etc. continuing well after the election and certainly until August 1992.
3. Stones thrown at a black woman in Southwark Park (summer 1991). There are many examples of stoning – from a shower of gravel to bricks. This stoning was stopped by local white people who took along Dobermans!
4. Violent attack on football team with black players (summer 1991). This was during the Metropolitan Police's 5-a-side football tournament. The attack resulted in the hospitalisation of a teacher who nearly lost his sight.
5. Response to the Southwark Black Consortium Demonstration (August 1991): Following the increase in attacks in the area over the summer, a demonstration was organised to protest; BNP members organised a counter demonstration and Union Jacks were unfurled from balconies on at least one estate as the demonstration passed.
6. Countless examples of verbal racist abuse aimed at black people and at white people known to oppose racism (those who have explicitly challenged racists, and white parents of mixed race children).
7. Stones, later bricks, thrown at the Bede Adventure Project minibus and workers as a result of being seen working with a group of Asian boys.
8. During the 1992 General Election, the BNP had between 30 and 55 members selling papers in the High Street each Saturday of the campaign. They have had – and continue to have – approximately six people selling papers each Saturday.
9. Black students at the recently opened branch of Southwark College endure attacks and threats by local white men; these include using knives, baseball bats, pit bull terriers (2 November 1992) and shooting with an air rifle; when the white caretaker went to the black students' assistance, he too was shot. The annex of the college has only been open since 1992.
10. In addition, the Bede House Adventure Project building suffered a serious arson attack in April 1992.

NF = National Front, BNP = British National Party, KKK = Ku Klux Klan
The BNP considers that it has a base locally and seeks to expand it, mainly by targeting young unemployed white men or school truants

Fig. 2: Examples of racist activity in the immediate locality (within half a kilometre radius from our premises), *BHA Report*, Autumn 1992

were aware that each context is unique and that most of our approaches and strategies would have to be developed on the job.

Over the three years, the project came into casual or sustained contact with nearly two hundred young people. Their ages ranged from under 10 to over 20, although most were adolescent males between the ages of 12 and 18. Of the young women who became involved, a group of between 15 and 20 opted to form a girls' group and develop their own programme of activities.

Although the focus of the project meant that our primary target group was white young people, between 15 and 20 individual young people from black, minority or ethnically mixed families in the area also took part, as well as a group of 15 young Somalis, some of whom were the victims of a racial attack. There was always a concern that targeting the potential and actual perpetrators of racial violence would reinforce the exclusion of the black young people who were their potential or actual victims. Our intention was to make sure this did not happen by encouraging individual young people from black, minority or ethnically mixed families to participate in the activities, and by helping to build their confidence and self-awareness.

However, as our work with the Somali young men showed, confidence and self-awareness were not always the main issue. Gaining access to leisure activities and local resources and having opportunities to interact with their white peers in a safe, supportive environment were equally pressing, especially for isolated groups of black young people. With only one full-time worker and no additional resources, it proved impossible to respond meaningfully to the full range of needs.

These and other limitations of a three-year detached scheme with finite funding, a handful of workers and a limited number of hours were apparent from the outset. Building relationships and trust takes time, and much of the first year was devoted to the slow and often frustrating task of making ourselves known to the young people we encountered on street-corners or in the local park, to their families and to others in the community. Developing shared values and approaches also required a stable and highly committed team, which was not easy to establish given the nature of the work and the unsociable hours involved.

Inevitably, there were growing pains – problems with staffing and differing views on how the work should be tackled. Even when these initial obstacles had been overcome, there were set-backs with the young people themselves, fuelling very real concerns about the viability of the work and whether it could really have a lasting impact. However, as relationships developed and individual attitudes and behaviour slowly began to change, the team's confidence grew.

Young people who only a few months before had been aggressively racist in their views and behaviour, were starting to opt out when their mates made racist jokes or comments. Provocative statements designed to entertain the group or negate the workers' views were being rephrased as genuine questions by individuals who were starting to doubt their own and others' racist assumptions. Some young people were finding a new language with which to talk about race, identity and difference. Others found their stereotypes being challenged by their positive experience of black workers on the project or by their exposure to new situations in which their views were no longer shared by the majority.

As the evidence grew that we were making a difference – including a significant reduction in racially-motivated attacks in the area – our concerns became focused on the need for continuity. Unfortunately, our efforts to campaign for a permanent detached youth work presence in the area met with only partial success. Nevertheless, objective evidence from the local police and discussions with local youth and others who supported the project over the three years confirmed that, during its short life, Bede Detached Youth Work Project (BDYWP) did succeed in either influencing or changing the attitudes of many of the young people we worked with. The figure could be as high as 80 per cent, although this evidence is empirical and the long-term effects on attitudes and behaviour in the area are impossible to quantify without a follow-up evaluation.

Our hope is that by describing how we worked with these young people and by giving a critical account of the project's progress, limitations and achievements, others will be encouraged or motivated when taking up similar, equally urgent work in their own communities.

BEDE DETACHED YOUTH WORK PROJECT

Background and History

Bede Detached Youth Work Project was established in April 1993 with funding from the Department for Education Development Grants. It was one of eight projects to receive a Youth Work Development Grant.

A month-long feasibility study conducted by Bede House Association (BHA) during the summer months of 1992 had confirmed that, while there was little evidence of organised gang activity, young people were being targeted by the BNP and were highly susceptible to white nationalist dogma. Little or no use was being made of existing youth services, which were seen as inadequate and under-resourced. The use of marijuana and alcohol was widespread, particularly in the evenings and at weekends when young people tended to congregate in groups or gangs on their home estates, often participating in vandalism or petty criminal activity.

Racist graffiti and comments were commonplace, and feelings about the increase in the number of black and ethnic minority families who had been moved into the area over recent years had become an increasing source of resentment and vindictive assaults.

Unsurprisingly, black young people were conspicuous by their absence and tended not to congregate or move around in groups. During the previous six months, BNP activists had maintained a regular Saturday afternoon presence down in 'the Blue', the local high street and market area. There had also been a violent racist attack on black young people involved in a football tournament, when several youngsters and their teacher had been injured, and the Bede Adventure Project had been subjected to an arson attack.

Several groups of white young people were identified with whom the project could work, if BHA's bid was successful. Some were keen to discuss issues such as drugs, sex, unemployment and relations with the police. Others expressed an interest in more structured activities and were generally positive about the possibility of working together. Boredom and the lack of community facilities were common themes, leading to a conclusion in the feasibility report that to ignore their needs – or the evidence that racially-motivated activity was on the rise – would be to put black families at risk and to further alienate local white youths.

BHA, which instigated the feasibility study and made the original funding application, received a grant from the National Youth Agency of around £49,000 per year over a three-year period. This provided sufficient funds for one full-time worker (Scale 3), a research and training consultant (up to £4,000 pa), and for

Bede Detached Youth Work Project Management Structure

	Key Roles & Responsibilities
FUNDING AGENCY DFEE Youth Work Development Grant	Funding Monitoring, Evaluation & Review Overall Accountability
ADVISORY COMMITTEE Sam Coates, Bede House Adventure Project Worker Stella Dadzie, Independent Consultant Steve Edwards, Detached Youth Worker, Kent CC Leah Levane, Director, BHA Angela MacDonagh, Local Resident Ros Norton, Short Course Coordinator, Goldsmiths College Tina Stanley, Bede Council Member Sonia Williams, Neighbourhood Youth Officer Aine Woods, Detached Youth Worker Ivan York, Independent Consultant	Policy & Development Major Management Decisions Monitoring & Evaluation Receipt of Reports & Data Supervision of Project Manager
PROJECT MANAGER Leah Levane, Director, BHA	Project Management Supervision of Project Coordinator Supervision of Work Plans Performance Evaluation
PROJECT COORDINATOR Aine Woods, Full-time Detached Youth Worker	Coordination of Detached Team Recruitment of Part-time Staff Team Work Schedules Liaison with parents/local agencies Project Administration
PART-TIME DETACHED WORKERS/VOLUNTEERS Sarah Addison Lilian Ash Ray Barker Sophie Calver Eileen Cambell Jan Hickey Santiago (Santi) Kamara Feroz Noor Sade Oladiti Elsa Tjuernland	Sessional Detached Youth Work Additional Sessional Hours Administrative Support when or as required
TRAINING & RESEARCH CONSULTANT Stella Dadzie, Independent Consultant	Research & Publications Advice & Training (Anti-Racism) Record-keeping & Evaluation
OTHER CONSULTANTS/ ADVISORS Ivan York, Independent Consultant	Additional Advice or Consultancy if needed

Fig. 3: BDYWP management, advice and support structure, December '93 to March '96

overheads, managerial and administrative support (approx £7,000 pa), leaving around £13,000 pa to be used flexibly for part-time hours, activities and outings.

The full-time detached youth worker, Aine Woods, was given the use of an office in the Bede Community Centre on one of the local housing estates as her base. The centre is home to a number of other BHA projects, including an adventure project, a crèche and a cafe. Her team, which eventually comprised up to three part-time detached youth workers, worked on the streets for up to 16 hours each week, often putting in extra time at weekends and during school holidays when camping trips or holiday schemes could be organised. Although they did not operate from any identified community base, they had access to BHA's minibus and to other resources such as a video camera and a mobile phone. The money set aside for outings and residentials made it possible to subsidise a number of group activities such as scrambling, skating and bowling that would otherwise have been inaccessible due to the high cost.

The detached team's day-to-day management was the responsibility of BHA's Director, Leah Levane. It was also answerable to an Advisory Committee which met on a bimonthly basis initially – this increased to monthly meetings during the project's final year – and whose role it was to oversee its direction and make any major policy decisions. Initially comprising people who had been involved in a Southwark Council funded feasibility study the previous summer and those who were responsible for making the original application, it also included a combination of local residents, youth workers, a representative of Bede Council, the research consultant, the full-time project coordinator and other interested parties [fig. 3]. Membership fluctuated over the three years, but there was a core group of members who attended consistently and ensured its continuity. While the management of the project proved problematic at times, particularly when attendance was poor or team morale was low, it nevertheless ensured that the project was seen to be answerable to local people and informed by its own local context.

The team was also supported by Stella Dadzie, an independent research consultant specialising in anti-racist work and race equality issues, whose role was to provide support and training; to advise the Committee; to assist the project with the task of recording and evaluating its work; and to develop this resource. By recording the process of establishing and running the project, it was hoped that the strategies and approaches that were developed over the three years could assist other youth workers involved in similar initiatives and ensure that those involved in the project could periodically reflect on their experiences and learn the relevant lessons.

Project Aims

The aims of the project were developed from the recommendations made in the feasibility study and formed the basis of BHA's funding bid. They were:

- to develop appropriate relationships, activities and community networks that will provide a focus for local young people and help foster their self-esteem;

- to facilitate greater access by young people to local community resources;
- to expose white young people to alternative, anti-racist views and encourage eventual collaboration with local black young people with a view to reducing and combating racist activity;
- to encourage exploration of alternative ways of expressing anger and of working cooperatively;
- to foster young people's sense of empowerment and their ability to take greater social, political and economic control of their lives;
- to monitor levels of racist activity and, where possible, to intervene; and
- to initiate training and research, and disseminate the findings so that others involved in detached youth work can benefit from identified good practice.

Project Outcomes

In April 1993, when the project began, it set out to achieve:

- direct and indirect contact with substantial numbers of young people in the area surrounding Bede House;
- a comprehensive programme of youth work with specific groups of these young people;
- a viable network of young people, local community members and area youth service providers in support of a youth work programme;
- involvement and eventual control by young people of a variety of youth work projects – e.g. advice, training, information and issue-based campaign work concerned with anti-racist activities;
- increased use and participation by young people of available youth work provision, educational opportunities and community activities;
- increased participation by young people on existing community work forums, projects and committees;
- a working network of local people, service providers and young people;
- the publication of material on the project's work, issues raised, outcomes and training and research data for use by the wider youth work field; and
- a raising of local and general public awareness of the needs of inner city youth and issues of concern.

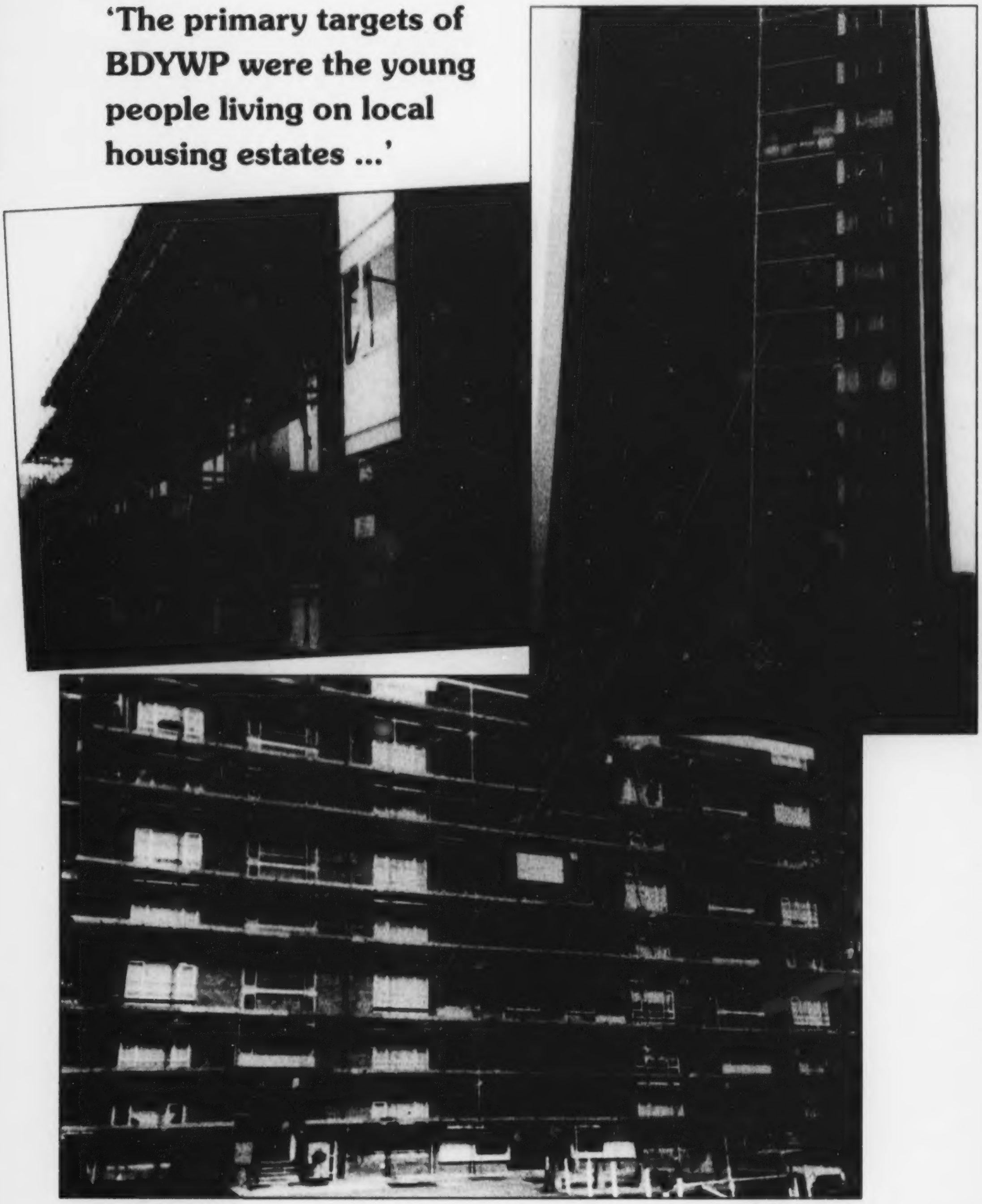
Fundamental to achieving these aims and outcomes was the need to build a relationship of trust with young people on the streets and local estates, and to develop strong, independent links with local community groups, tenants' associations and youth providers in the area. During the project's first few months, the main focus was on developing these ties and on active street-work – fostering positive relationships with local young people and thinking of ways of responding flexibly to their expressed needs.

Success Criteria

A set of criteria was also developed that would help us to evaluate our work and determine whether the project had been successful. These were listed in the form of questions we hoped to be able to answer with 'yes' in three years time:

- Has there been a measurable attitude or behaviour shift in young people involved with the project?
  [Has the community responded positively to the project's anti-racist activities – e.g. festivals, multi-ethnic groups, training initiatives, activity programmes?]
- Will some of the work continue after the withdrawal of the full-time worker?
  [Is there a community network in place? Have young people supported the work both in terms of participation and in taking responsibility for its continuation?]
- Is there heightened community awareness and involvement in youth work initiatives?
  [Have young people been engaged in community work – e.g. surveys, newsletters, video projects? Are these likely to continue?]
- Has the project become recognised by the youth service and other service providers as a major voice in local youth issues?
- Is there evidence of collaboration between young black and white people as a direct result of the project's work?

‘The primary targets of BDYWP were the young people living on local housing estates ...’



Housing estates in Bermondsey

Photos: BDYWP

'... where boredom and lack of community facilities were common themes ...'

NO
BALL
GAMES

Housing estates in Bermondsey

Photos: BDYWP

YEAR ONE: GROWING PAINS

Reconnaissance

The first year of the project can best be described as a period of reconnaissance and bridge-building. The priority during the first few months was to get to know the area and the local housing estates, to identify the young people and to establish where and how they spent their leisure time. Aine Woods, the full-time worker who was appointed to coordinate the work, also set about making links with Tenants' Associations, neighbourhood youth workers, local residents, key individuals, community groups and voluntary organisations in the area.

Apart from letting people know about the project and what it was aiming to do, there was also a need to find out about local attitudes, particularly towards black people and other minorities. The general perception of Bermondsey was of a white, working-class, racist enclave – an impression that was frequently confirmed by reports in the local papers. In the months leading up to the start of the project, stories had abounded of racist activity in the immediate locality [figs. 4–6].

Although the local press often condemned such incidents, using editorials to voice concerns about the activities of the BNP and other racists, there were also times when issues were presented in a way that could only serve to cause resentment and further antagonism towards black people living in the area [figs. 7–8].

As well as speaking out through the media, it was important for the project to identify any potential allies and to gauge the views of parents, teachers and other adults who were in contact with the young people of Bermondsey on a day-to-day basis. Some of these encounters were encouraging and showed that the stereotype of the community as racist by no means applied to everyone; others were disheartening.

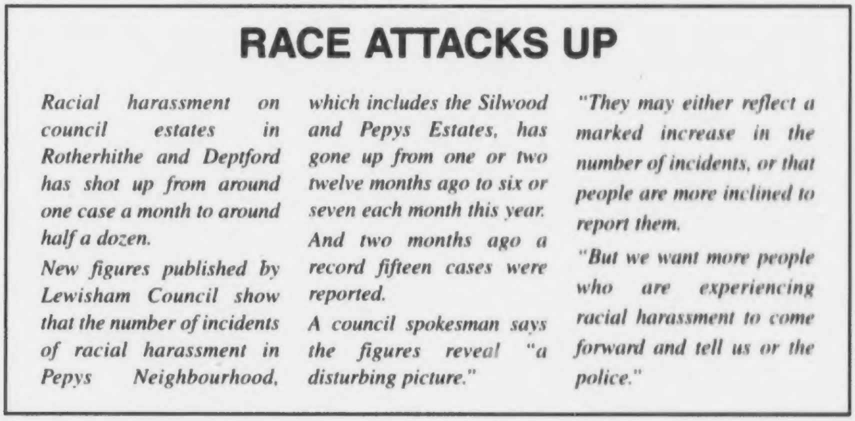
There were some vehement and hostile views about black people, and the casual use of racist terms and anecdotes went mostly unchallenged. There was also opposition to the council's equal opportunities policies, which were generally believed to be loaded in favour of black people:

> Half of these kids don't understand why, if you're in school and you're having an argument and someone comes out with 'you black slag' or something like that and the teacher goes 'you called him black' – 'Yeah, but he called me a white honkey', the teacher's down on the white kid more than the black one. Now that attitude goes through the school with them. They think 'well, we're nothing, according to the teacher we're second class citizens, they're better than us'. That's what's coming from a lot of teachers, and if that's their attitude, to me it's wrong. The thing is, in the schools – and I work in one – what happens, to be perfectly honest with you, is it's rammed down those kids' throats day after day not to be racist. But when you

> get black kids calling a white kid a honkey nothing is said. And you wonder why some of the kids' attitude is wrong!
>
> I told the headmistress, I said, 'I don't agree with this, if you're going to say that a white kid can't say a racist comment to a black, it's got to be the other way round as well'. That's why kids are getting the attitude 'it's not fair, it's always us that's being picked on, what about when they have a go at us?' That's the attitude these days and people do get the arsehole about it.
>
> Local parent, April '94

These attitudes raised some serious questions. How could the project hope to have a long-term influence on young people when such views were coming not only from their peers but from their parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and older siblings? How were the workers to challenge young people's racism, when for many of them it went hand-in-glove with their notion of their own identity, of what it meant to be a 'Bermondsey sort'? This was probably the project's biggest challenge.

> There is a big community atmosphere in this area and there are a lot of good things that come from that. But the danger is that in this area it borders on a kind of Bermondsey nationalism. I know that from when I was younger, because I was brought up in the area. There was this clothing company, Mode 3, that brought out these T-shirts with 'Mode 3 Bermondsey' right across the front and everyone in Bermondsey bought one of those T-shirts, all the young people. You'd be down the West End and you'd see someone with that T-shirt on. Now you wouldn't necessarily get that in Clapham, do you understand, it's like a real community atmosphere, a real pride, but that can border on racism and nationalism. What we've got to try and do is keep that pride, that self-worth, yet keep it within the parameters of self-pride ...
>
> Local youth worker, April '94



RACE ATTACKS UP

Racial harassment on council estates in Rotherhithe and Deptford has shot up from around one case a month to around half a dozen.

New figures published by Lewisham Council show that the number of incidents of racial harassment in Pepys Neighbourhood, which includes the Silwood and Pepys Estates, has gone up from one or two twelve months ago to six or seven each month this year.

And two months ago a record fifteen cases were reported.

A council spokesman says the figures reveal "a disturbing picture."

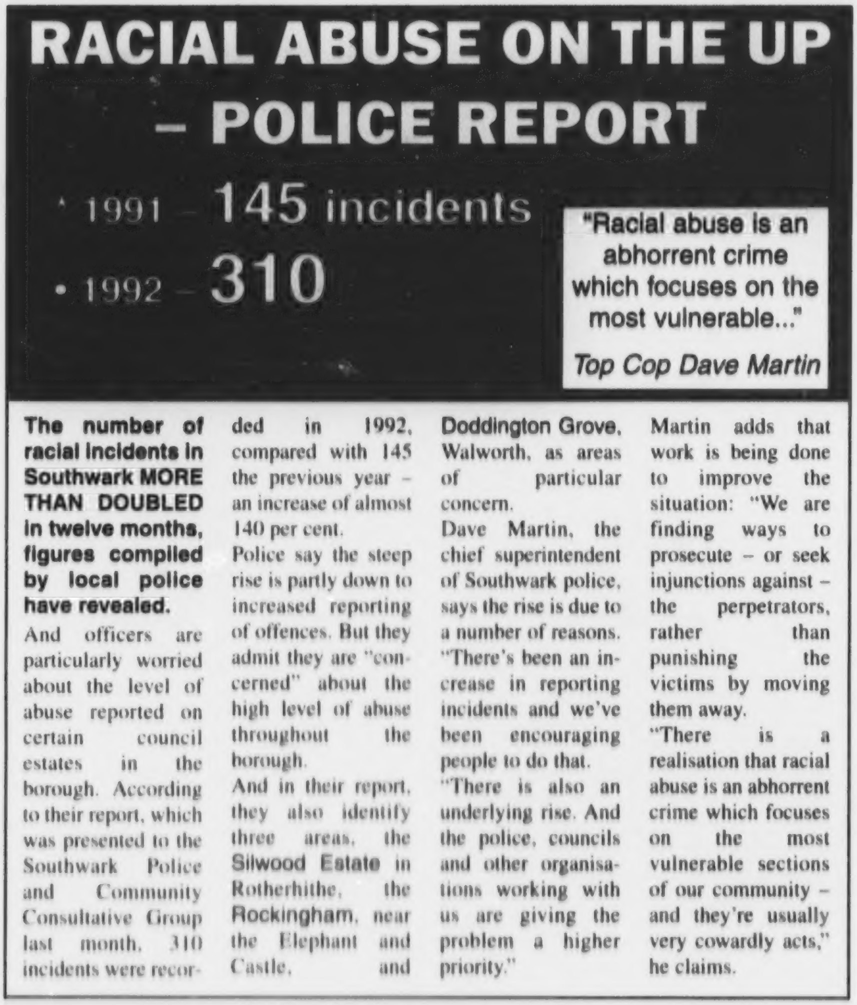
"They may either reflect a marked increase in the number of incidents, or that people are more inclined to report them.

"But we want more people who are experiencing racial harassment to come forward and tell us or the police."

Fig. 4: Race Attacks Up, *Southwark News*, 10.9.92

Initial contacts with many of the young people were characterised by suspicion and mistrust. The newly appointed detached workers faced several months of perseverance before they were able to establish any credibility. Records of their earliest encounters with young people on the streets refer to high levels of drug-taking and alcohol abuse, vandalism and aggressively racist views, expressed both in conversation and through graffiti and spontaneous acts of violence.

There was an absence of suitable venues and resources for young people generally in the area. Two local youth clubs had been closed down, and the Neighbourhood Youth Office was operating with only one full-time worker. On the Manor Estate,



RACIAL ABUSE ON THE UP – POLICE REPORT

- 1991 – 145 incidents
- 1992 – 310

> **"Racial abuse is an abhorrent crime which focuses on the most vulnerable..."**
>
> *Top Cop Dave Martin*

The number of racial incidents in Southwark MORE THAN DOUBLED in twelve months, figures compiled by local police have revealed.

And officers are particularly worried about the level of abuse reported on certain council estates in the borough. According to their report, which was presented to the Southwark Police and Community Consultative Group last month, 310 incidents were recorded in 1992, compared with 145 the previous year – an increase of almost 140 per cent.

Police say the steep rise is partly down to increased reporting of offences. But they admit they are "concerned" about the high level of abuse throughout the borough.

And in their report, they also identify three areas, the **Silwood Estate** in Rotherhithe, the **Rockingham**, near the Elephant and Castle, and **Doddington Grove**, Walworth, as areas of particular concern.

Dave Martin, the chief superintendent of Southwark police, says the rise is due to a number of reasons.

"There's been an increase in reporting incidents and we've been encouraging people to do that.

"There is also an underlying rise. And the police, councils and other organisations working with us are giving the problem a higher priority."

Martin adds that work is being done to improve the situation: "We are finding ways to prosecute – or seek injunctions against – the perpetrators, rather than punishing the victims by moving them away.

"There is a realisation that racial abuse is an abhorrent crime which focuses on the most vulnerable sections of our community – and they're usually very cowardly acts," he claims.

Fig. 5: Racial Abuse on the Up, *Southwark News*, 4.11.93

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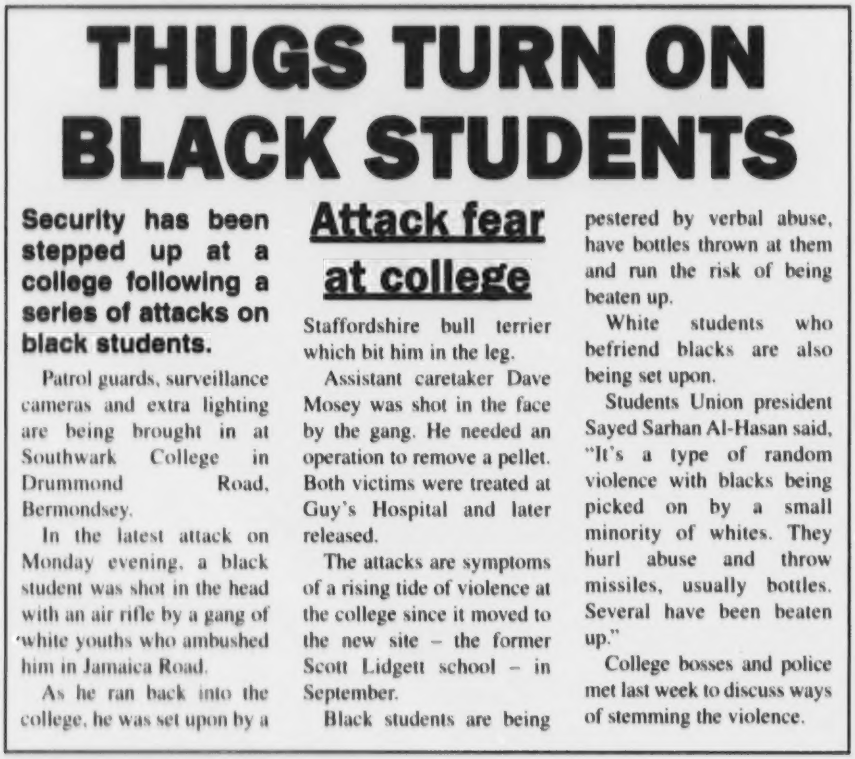
concerns about this situation had led the Tenants' Association to set up their own youth club, although a lack of resources or trained workers limited what they were able to provide:

> There were only four or five of us when we started. We had a meeting one night and we said 'well, what about a youth club, there's nothing for the kids'. We've got about one hundred and twenty on our books now, but we don't have them all in at once, maybe forty or fifty on a Tuesday night. See, we're funding it ourselves. The older ones have stopped coming because all we've got is a telly and a snooker table. We've been offered a part-time youth worker for Thursday nights, but it all comes down to money. We've got to get more equipment.
>
> We've even asked our local beat bobby to look into whether the police would give us any money ... There used to be a youth club, and we loved it because it kept the kids off the street, but it closed down. Quite honestly, they couldn't give a shit about the kids. They moan at us that the kids are causing trouble, and I say 'but it's because they're bored, there's nothing to do around here'. We're having so many problems because they will not do anything for this estate ... We feel sorry for the kids, we really do.

Member of the Manor Tenants' Association, April '94



THUGS TURN ON BLACK STUDENTS

Attack fear at college

Security has been stepped up at a college following a series of attacks on black students.

Patrol guards, surveillance cameras and extra lighting are being brought in at Southwark College in Drummond Road, Bermondsey.

In the latest attack on Monday evening, a black student was shot in the head with an air rifle by a gang of white youths who ambushed him in Jamaica Road.

As he ran back into the college, he was set upon by a Staffordshire bull terrier which bit him in the leg.

Assistant caretaker Dave Mosey was shot in the face by the gang. He needed an operation to remove a pellet. Both victims were treated at Guy's Hospital and later released.

The attacks are symptoms of a rising tide of violence at the college since it moved to the new site – the former Scott Lidgett school – in September.

Black students are being pestered by verbal abuse, have bottles thrown at them and run the risk of being beaten up.

White students who befriend blacks are also being set upon.

Students Union president Sayed Sarhan Al-Hasan said, "It's a type of random violence with blacks being picked on by a small minority of whites. They hurl abuse and throw missiles, usually bottles. Several have been beaten up."

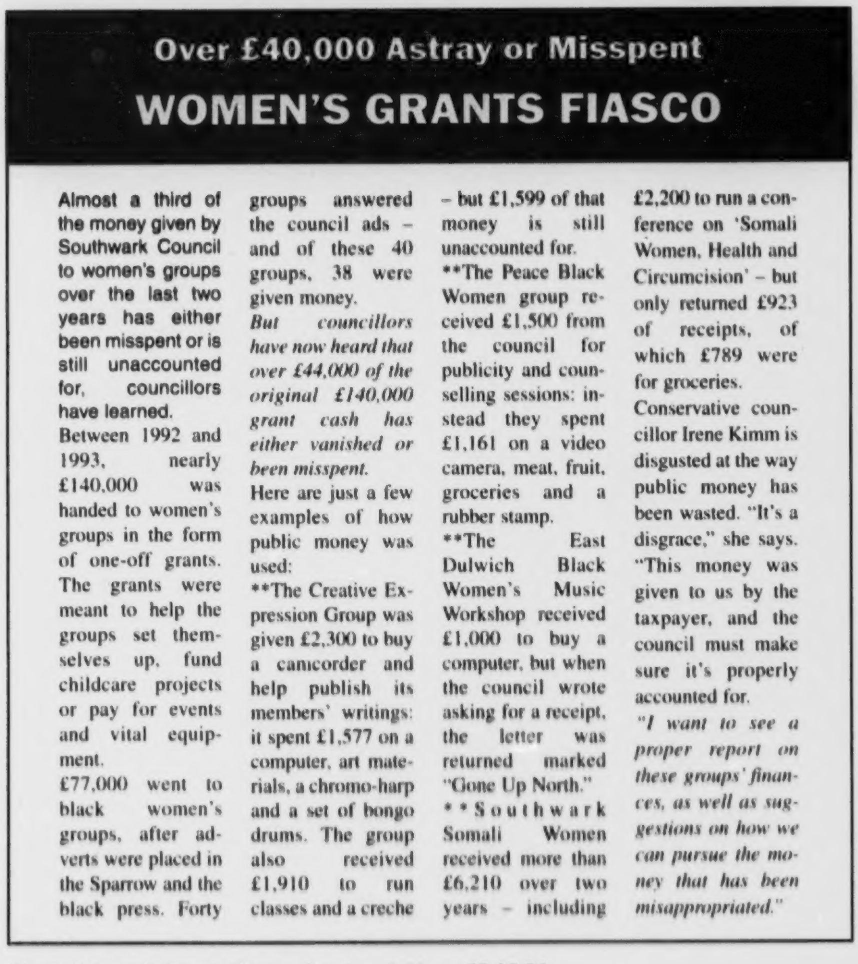
College bosses and police met last week to discuss ways of stemming the violence.

Fig. 6: Thugs Turn on Black Students, *South London Press*, 13.11.92

Given the entrenched racist views in some quarters, it was good to know that there were parents, volunteers and local residents who were concerned about young people and willing to devote their time and energies to them:

> Apart from the Manor club, the only thing they've got to do around here is just play around downstairs. Most of the kids round here come over to these flats because the bigger kids bully them ... there's nothing for them to do, apart from the youth club. The trouble is, of all the mums and dads on this estate, there's only one or two who actually do anything with their kids. The dads, they come home and it's 'oh, I'm too tired, I wanna have a sleep'... but I think doing things with your kids is part of being a parent ...

Local parent, April '94



Over £40,000 Astray or Misspent

WOMEN'S GRANTS FIASCO

Almost a third of the money given by Southwark Council to women's groups over the last two years has either been misspent or is still unaccounted for, councillors have learned.

Between 1992 and 1993, nearly £140,000 was handed to women's groups in the form of one-off grants. The grants were meant to help the groups set themselves up, fund childcare projects or pay for events and vital equipment.

£77,000 went to black women's groups, after adverts were placed in the Sparrow and the black press. Forty groups answered the council ads – and of these 40 groups, 38 were given money.

But councillors have now heard that over £44,000 of the original £140,000 grant cash has either vanished or been misspent.

Here are just a few examples of how public money was used:

**The Creative Expression Group was given £2,300 to buy a camcorder and help publish its members' writings: it spent £1,577 on a computer, art materials, a chromo-harp and a set of bongo drums. The group also received £1,910 to run classes and a creche – but £1,599 of that money is still unaccounted for.

**The Peace Black Women group received £1,500 from the council for publicity and counselling sessions: instead they spent £1,161 on a video camera, meat, fruit, groceries and a rubber stamp.

**The East Dulwich Black Women's Music Workshop received £1,000 to buy a computer, but when the council wrote asking for a receipt, the letter was returned marked "Gone Up North."

**Southwark Somali Women received more than £6,210 over two years – including £2,200 to run a conference on 'Somali Women, Health and Circumcision' – but only returned £923 of receipts, of which £789 were for groceries.

Conservative councillor Irene Kimm is disgusted at the way public money has been wasted. "It's a disgrace," she says. "This money was given to us by the taxpayer, and the council must make sure it's properly accounted for.

"I want to see a proper report on these groups' finances, as well as suggestions on how we can pursue the money that has been misappropriated."

Fig. 7: Women's Grants Fiasco, *Southwark News*, 15.12.93

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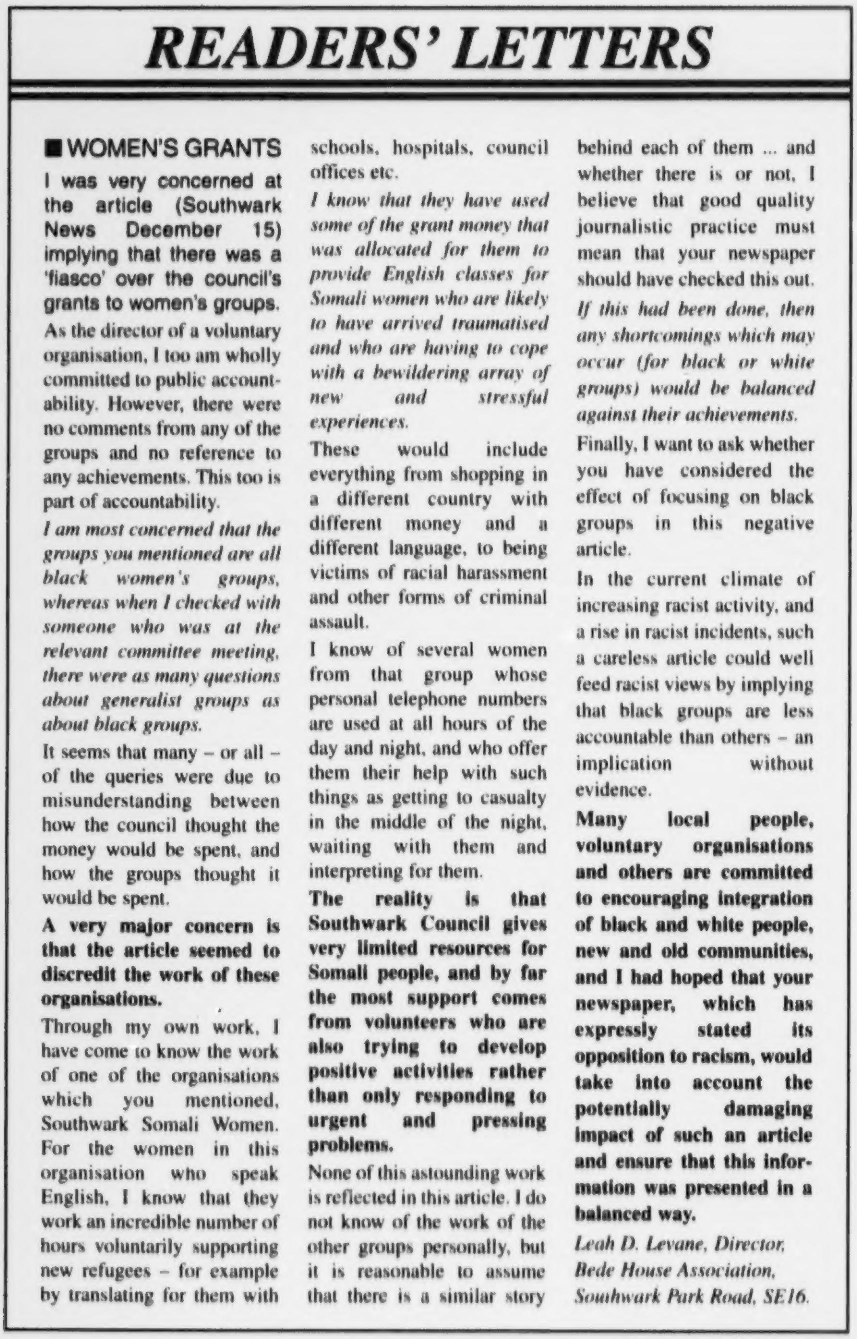

READERS' LETTERS

■ WOMEN'S GRANTS

I was very concerned at the article (Southwark News December 15) implying that there was a 'fiasco' over the council's grants to women's groups.

As the director of a voluntary organisation, I too am wholly committed to public accountability. However, there were no comments from any of the groups and no reference to any achievements. This too is part of accountability.

I am most concerned that the groups you mentioned are all black women's groups, whereas when I checked with someone who was at the relevant committee meeting, there were as many questions about generalist groups as about black groups.

It seems that many – or all – of the queries were due to misunderstanding between how the council thought the money would be spent, and how the groups thought it would be spent.

A very major concern is that the article seemed to discredit the work of these organisations.

Through my own work, I have come to know the work of one of the organisations which you mentioned, Southwark Somali Women. For the women in this organisation who speak English, I know that they work an incredible number of hours voluntarily supporting new refugees – for example by translating for them with schools, hospitals, council offices etc.

I know that they have used some of the grant money that was allocated for them to provide English classes for Somali women who are likely to have arrived traumatised and who are having to cope with a bewildering array of new and stressful experiences.

These would include everything from shopping in a different country with different money and a different language, to being victims of racial harassment and other forms of criminal assault.

I know of several women from that group whose personal telephone numbers are used at all hours of the day and night, and who offer them their help with such things as getting to casualty in the middle of the night, waiting with them and interpreting for them.

The reality is that Southwark Council gives very limited resources for Somali people, and by far the most support comes from volunteers who are also trying to develop positive activities rather than only responding to urgent and pressing problems.

None of this astounding work is reflected in this article. I do not know of the work of the other groups personally, but it is reasonable to assume that there is a similar story behind each of them ... and whether there is or not, I believe that good quality journalistic practice must mean that your newspaper should have checked this out.

If this had been done, then any shortcomings which may occur (for black or white groups) would be balanced against their achievements.

Finally, I want to ask whether you have considered the effect of focusing on black groups in this negative article.

In the current climate of increasing racist activity, and a rise in racist incidents, such a careless article could well feed racist views by implying that black groups are less accountable than others – an implication without evidence.

Many local people, voluntary organisations and others are committed to encouraging integration of black and white people, new and old communities, and I had hoped that your newspaper, which has expressly stated its opposition to racism, would take into account the potentially damaging impact of such an article and ensure that this information was presented in a balanced way.

Leah D. Levane, Director,
Bede House Association,
Southwark Park Road, SE16.

Fig. 8: Readers' Letters, *Southwark News*, 26.1.94

Those involved with the detached project were very aware that it was only going to be funded for three years, and that long after its departure the local community would still be dealing with the problems facing its young people. This community spirit was clearly a resource the project would need to tap in to if it was to have any meaningful impact.

Agreeing Priorities

Despite early misgivings about the wisdom of targeting white young people, and therefore focusing all the team's energies on the perpetrators rather than the victims of racism, it quickly became apparent that the work they were hoping to do would have no effect if they tried to spread themselves too thinly. Contact with black young people was sporadic, with many of them leaving the area for social and recreational purposes.

> I've been terribly conscious that all the kids I'm working with are white, and the reason why is because the black kids are too terrified to come out on the streets. When I stopped and talked to that group of black youths and they told me they were going off over to Peckham, part of me understood exactly why they were moving out of the area. And I found myself thinking, why should I be working to bring them back into the area to get the shit kicked out of them again? It was a real dilemma ...
>
> Team debriefing, January '94

Fear of racial abuse and harassment had forced others off the streets altogether, while their take-up of local youth club facilities was more limited the older they became.

> What we find is that black young people come to the 6–9 age group, they come to the 10–13 age group, but not the 14-plus age-group, not the open clubs ... I was walking along the other day and there was a group of black young men and one of them went 'where have you been?' – and it was 'Oh, I've just come back from Peckham' – 'oh, that's where we're going now' and that was just a conversation I heard in passing. I know that a lot of them go to Peckham. The Old Kent Road is almost like a big dividing line, it's like a real boundary – once you go past that, that's Peckham, that's the black area, but once you come over this side, it's the white area. It's almost like a geographical thing.
>
> Local youth worker, April '94

Other black young people operated as isolated individuals who seemed to find it easier to deny their Somali, Vietnamese, Asian and African-Caribbean identities or the fact that they were of mixed parentage than to risk being ostracised or singled out by their white peers.

One of the earliest debates within the Advisory Committee centred on the ethics of targeting the perpetrators of racist violence and concerns about the message this gave to local black people. A few members found it hard to reconcile the notion of detached youth work, which was meant to be about working with young people on the streets, with the reality that black young people in the area were largely too intimidated by racism to have a noticeable street presence.

Others felt that working with the perpetrators was Bede's contribution to a much wider problem and should be seen as a rare opportunity to redefine anti-racist youth work, which has traditionally worked with 'softer' target groups.

It was important to stay focused, and the primary target group was defined by the aims of the project. It was clear that there were isolated black young people around with whom the team could work, and an agreement was reached that they should find ways of supporting the black young people they did encounter and review the situation at a later date, when the project was more established.

Advisory Committee meetings were a forum for many similar debates about how the project's aims and priorities were to be translated into practice, and as is common in newly-formed committees, there was often marked disagreement about how this was to be done. The workers were still finding their feet and felt under pressure to prove themselves, while members of the Advisory Committee understandably wanted tangible evidence that the work they were doing was going somewhere.

> The first eight or nine months were really difficult. There were members on the management team who expected us to just dive in there, but despite their lip-service to the principles of detached youth work, I got the impression that they were really quite out of touch with the realities of working on the streets. There was a conflict about the way we worked, and I was left feeling that they just didn't understand. I was saying to them, 'look, I'm the one who's on the streets on the frontline, I know what's going down' and I was being asked 'but why haven't you got a minibus or a coachload of young people on a Saturday night taking them here and taking them there?' And I was thinking 'you must be joking! The kids today are different to how they were ten or fifteen years ago'. With a project of this nature, you have to spend six to eight months just walking and talking and nodding before you can think about taking them out. They had to have a vested interest in a relationship with me. Once I started taking them out, this meant I was in control of the situation. I knew exactly who they all were, they'd all at some stage had a particular relationship with me and they couldn't fuck up. You have to earn that kind of respect, it doesn't just happen ...
>
> Team review, December '94

Forming the Team

The question of how best to work with the young people was complicated during the first year by ongoing staffing problems. It had been hoped that the team would develop as a core group of one full-time and two or three part-time workers who would remain with the project for its duration. However, it proved hard to find people prepared to contemplate the prospect of working unsocial hours at evenings and weekends in inhospitable conditions or to commit themselves to this for the next three years.

Because of the nature of part-time work and the need to supplement the relatively low pay involved, the detached work often had to fit in with other jobs and commitments. Consequently, part-time staff turnover was high at a time when an almost nightly presence was needed on the local estates. Safety was also a major concern. One worker left because she felt she needed more hours than were available to build a safe rapport with the youth. Another, whose partner was Asian, had stones thrown at her by a group of youths one night, and because she lived locally and had children at home, she felt it was unfair to put them at risk. In all, five part-timers came and went during the first 12 months, either out of an inability to commit themselves to the work or out of a genuine concern for their own safety.

> We were going through the Manor the other night and there was the usual group there, the ones who've been doing the stoning down the Blue, and we just walked straight past them. It was very much the case that they didn't want to talk to us, they didn't want to interact or have any type of conversation with us. Some of them were actually hiding in the corner. So we went through the estate and as we were walking along, these stones came flying across and just missed us. B. was quite freaked out, she was going 'oh my god, oh my god' but I said, 'look, if they wanted to get us, they'd have hit us by now. They're good shots and they were aiming for the stones to go behind us or over the top of us ...'
>
> Report to Advisory Committee, Nov '93

Finding detached workers with the appropriate experience and skills [fig. 9] was also a problem. Adults were needed who could relate well to young people, and respond to the pressures of having their tolerance of racist, sexist and homophobic views and other boundaries constantly tested. There was also the question of the additional physical risk to anyone black who applied. As Aine set out to build relationships with the different, often hostile groups of young people she was encountering, it became increasingly vital that her team consisted of people with the confidence and commitment to work in such a confrontational environment.

> The main difficulty I've had is to try and recruit a staff team which has the understanding to work in a way that creates trust and a rapport with the young people. Someone who is too politically correct would be disastrous, yet it's important not to be seen to be condoning the young people's actions or attitudes. We know we need to set up tight boundaries if we are to promote the aims of this project. One of the rules of detached youth work is that it is poor practice to work alone and I'm desperate to find people to go out there with me, so that I can get on with it. If we are to present a strong image of being united, there has to be a team approach to the work. Getting together a like-minded team of workers has proven far more difficult than I'd expected.

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Bede House Detached Youth Work Project

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Part-time Detached Youth and Community Worker

PURPOSE OF THE POST

The purpose of the post is to achieve the aims and objectives of the project as outlined in the document entitled *Bede House Detached Youth Work Project – Background, Aims and Objectives*

ORGANISATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The organisational relationships related to this post are outlined in the document entitled *Job Description*

ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS

A recognised qualification in youth work, community work (with extensive youth work training) or social work (in the service of young people) is essential for this job

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Knowledge of the needs of inner city young people and the nature of inner city living as it impacts on the lives of young people
2. Knowledge of a wide range of youth work methods, especially detached youth work within a community development programme
3. Knowledge of youth and community work in a multi-racial context and the strategies and work methods used to combat racism and promote social justice
4. Knowledge of current and past youth work practice and research
5. Some knowledge of youth and community work training, especially as it applies to training for young people
6. Knowledge of a wide range of youth work activity programmes and resources that can be mobilised in the service of young people
7. Knowledge of health, safety and security procedures in youth work provision

ESSENTIAL EXPERIENCE

1. Experience of detached or outreach youth work in an inner city, multi-racial setting
2. Experience of working within a community development context, with other workers and local people
3. Experience of actively applying equal opportunities criteria to work undertaken and evaluating the work against such criteria
4. Experience of using and managing the use of resources effectively – e.g. time, part-time staff, materials and equipment, transport, money and the use of residential, sporting and outdoor facilities
5. Experience of analysing and recording work undertaken on a regular basis

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

1. The ability to make, sustain and use contact with young people in a professional, positive and caring manner
2. The ability to befriend, support, challenge and inspire young people so as to enhance their personal and social development
3. The ability to work alongside other members of a staff team, with other workers and with local people towards the achievement of collectively agreed aims and objectives
4. The ability to communicate effectively orally and in writing, and the ability to prepare written material in support of the work
5. The ability to manage one's own work and the work of others; to produce regular work plans; and to manage and be accountable for resources
6. The ability and willingness to work unsocial hours, and to motivate oneself in what can sometimes be isolated and difficult working conditions
7. To be of sufficient good health, so as to be able to do 'street work' and other outdoor work
8. To be able and willing to organise and take part in residential work and to support such work when not directly involved

Fig. 9: BDYWP person specification for part-time detached youth and community worker, July '93

> I've been sifting through Southwark's pool of part-time youth workers and those I've chosen either weren't available during the hours I could offer or needed more part-time hours than the budget allows for – it is really frustrating. I am also feeling frustrated at not making more contact with groups of young people. I feel that the time is passing and even though I want to get on with the work, I'm restricted by not having a fully operational team and the necessary resources.
>
> Report to Advisory Committee, November '93

The need to recruit and stabilise the staff team was partly resolved in January 1994 when a local resident volunteered to join the project. Despite having no training or background in youth work, Ray Barker met other equally significant criteria – he was local, he knew the area and the people who lived there, he was available, and above all, as a reformed National Front supporter turned anti-racist, he was fully committed to the aims of the project.

> I met Aine totally by accident. I was trying to do something about a stoning incident down the Blue on the Sunday, and I was doing things I'd never done before. I even contacted the local council. I was shit scared basically that something was going to go down, something bad could happen. They were intimidating people and attacking them on the streets, but from my experience over the years, I believe that the reason a lot of it can take place is because people are isolated and feel they can't do anything about it.
>
> So I got in touch with BARARF (Bermondsey & Rotherhithe Anti-Racist Forum) and they put me in touch with Aine. We started discussing things and then Aine asked me if I'd like to work with her on a voluntary basis to begin with, just to see how I got on. So it was totally by accident that I started working on the project, I'd never have applied for the job because I didn't have a background of working with young people or any youth work training.
>
> Ray, part-time worker from January '94

Later that year, in September 1994, the team was joined by Santi Kamara, a black man with several years' experience of working with young people. Having grown up in the East End of London, he had few illusions about the young people in Bermondsey and was not intimidated by the prospect of working with them. His immediate rapport with them stemmed from his ability to relate to many of the issues that affected them by offering practical advice and support; and from his humour, which proved to be an effective challenge to some of their stereotypes.

> I remember not long after I started working on the project, we went over to the park and I was chatting to a group of the young men and they went 'We think you're okay because you're not one of those black people who wear those stupid leather hats'. And I pulled my hat out of my pocket and put it on my head. They just looked at me. They didn't know where to put their faces (laughs).
>
> Santi, part-time worker from September '94

Santi was not the first black worker to be recruited to the team, nor was he the last. Despite the obvious risks, there was a firm commitment to employing black workers who would hopefully bring to the project their first-hand experience of challenging racism as well as serving as positive role models. However, an earlier appointment lasted barely three months. The worker concerned had found it difficult to develop a rapport with the young people, who often treated him with hostility or suspicion:

> He'd stand in the background and he wouldn't say anything and the kids thought he didn't like them. On one occasion we were travelling back in the minibus with a group of the lads and they were coming out with all kinds of outrageous, provocative comments. I was driving and he was in the back of the van. When we got back I said 'look we really need to talk about this last session we've just done' and he said 'yeah, they were really racist weren't they' and I said 'but surely our job is to challenge and confront that racism' and he went 'oh no, it's not my job'. Now I agree that on a lot of occasions, it's not down to black people to challenge white people's racism, but when you're working on a project like this, you've really got no choice ...
>
> Worker's induction, October '94

Like several other part-timers who joined the project during the first 12 months, he decided to leave and the quest for a suitable replacement began again.

It was always intended that the team would be stable yet flexible. It needed to be able to recruit additional part-timers when required – for example, to help run the playscheme during the summer months or, as was the case with Sophie's appointment, to take on a particular piece of targeted work with the young women. Sessional workers could come and go in a matter of weeks but during that time they enriched the project and, in some cases, made a lasting impression on the young people they worked with.

Building Bridges

Despite the difficulties of establishing a consistent team of workers, the task of building relationships was slowly progressing. The young people who were most visible on the estates in the evenings – predominantly white males between the ages of 11 and 19 – complained of having nothing to do and nowhere to go, and it was clear that boredom was at the root of much of their anti-social behaviour.

> No-one around here could have failed to realise what was going on, I could see it from my window – every Sunday night they'd be at it, they'd go running down the Blue and then they'd all come running back again, laughing. It wasn't the kind of situation where they went steaming in and kicking people, it was more from a distance stuff, chucking bags of rubbish out in front of black people's cars, chucking eggs or stones at their cars, that sort of thing ...
>
> Team review, April '94

The BDYWP Team

Ray

Santi

Ray and Aine

Photos: BDYWP

Questions about their out-of-school or leisure interests revealed that, regardless of age, football was the most popular activity among the boys and young men. An offer to help them organise a football team led to the establishment of a regular training slot and Ray's appointment as team coach.

> We used to meet up in one of the local pubs, because that's where some of the lads were all hanging out at one stage until they got kicked out of there. The BNP or Combat 18 used to use the place, whether they used to hold their meetings there I don't know, but after their paper sales down the Blue, it would be straight from the Blue into the pub. There were quite a lot of them and it was well known that anyone with a black face shouldn't go in there. An Asian bloke made the mistake of going in for a packet of cigarettes once and he got the shit kicked out of him. Anyway, we were sitting in there having a drink with them one night and we brought up the idea of getting a team together.

Team review, April '94

Football proved to be a useful carrot, and having obtained some complimentary tickets, the promise of free trips to Millwall games gave the two workers access to another older group of youths, who had so far resisted all the workers' efforts to befriend them. Motorbike scrambling was also a popular choice, particularly since it was being offered to them free of charge.

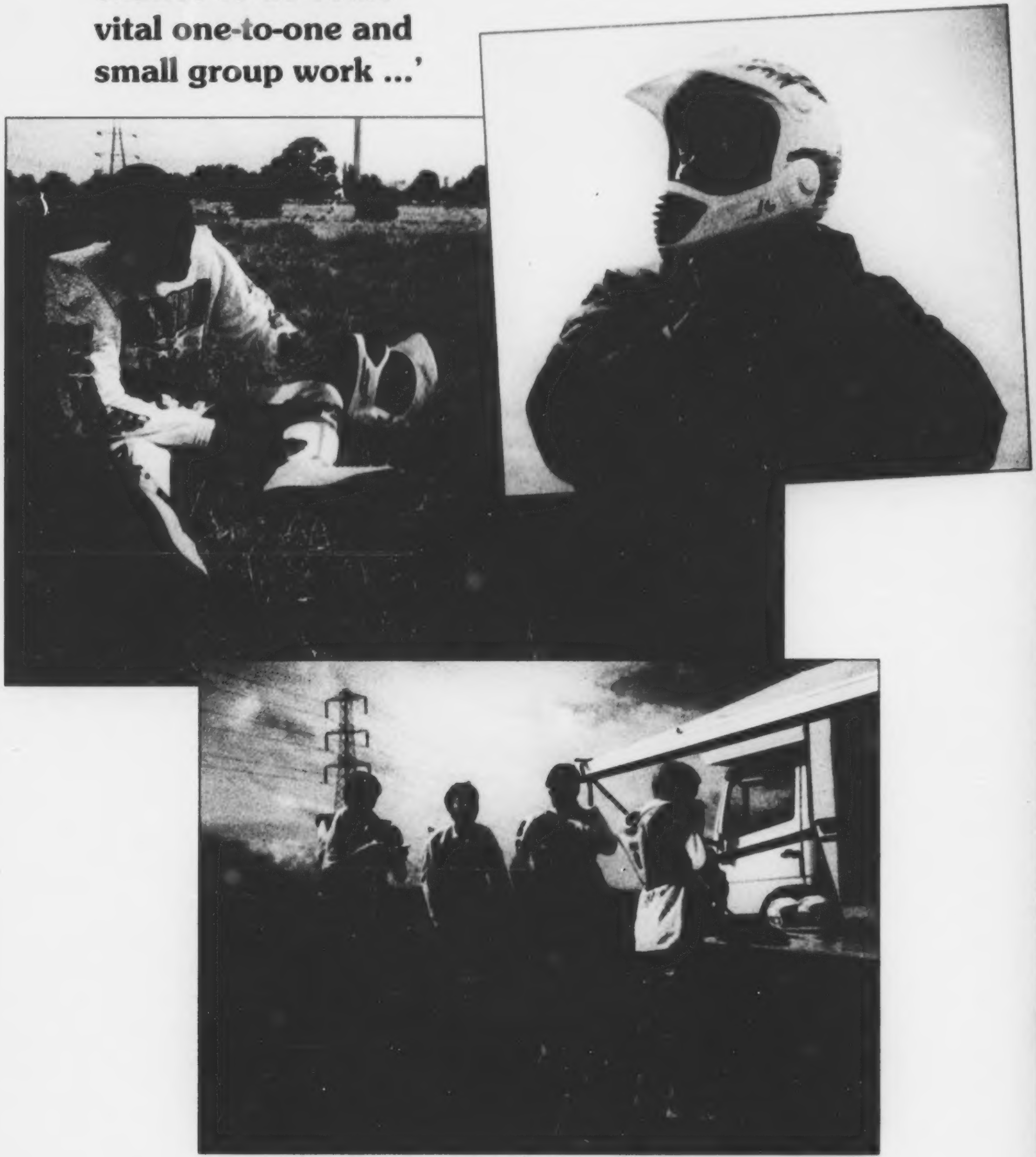
> The football and the scrambling started happening around the same time. I dealt with the football and Aine organised the scrambling. We also did some horse-riding but that was mainly with the young women. The whole attitude of the youth changed, these kids thought they'd never ever get the chance to go scrambling because it's so expensive to do. And they loved it and they wanted to go again and do other activities like it. It really broke some ground with them. For the first time adults in the community were showing them respect and giving them their time, their energy, the space and the money to say 'yeah, come along lads, you're welcome, no problem'. They'd never had that before.

Team review, April '94

These trips were a chance to do some vital one-to-one and small group work. Time spent in the minibus and on the track was used to develop a closer rapport with small groups of up to six young people at a time, often with a prior agreement that particular individuals would be targeted, or that one of the team would work at getting to know them better.

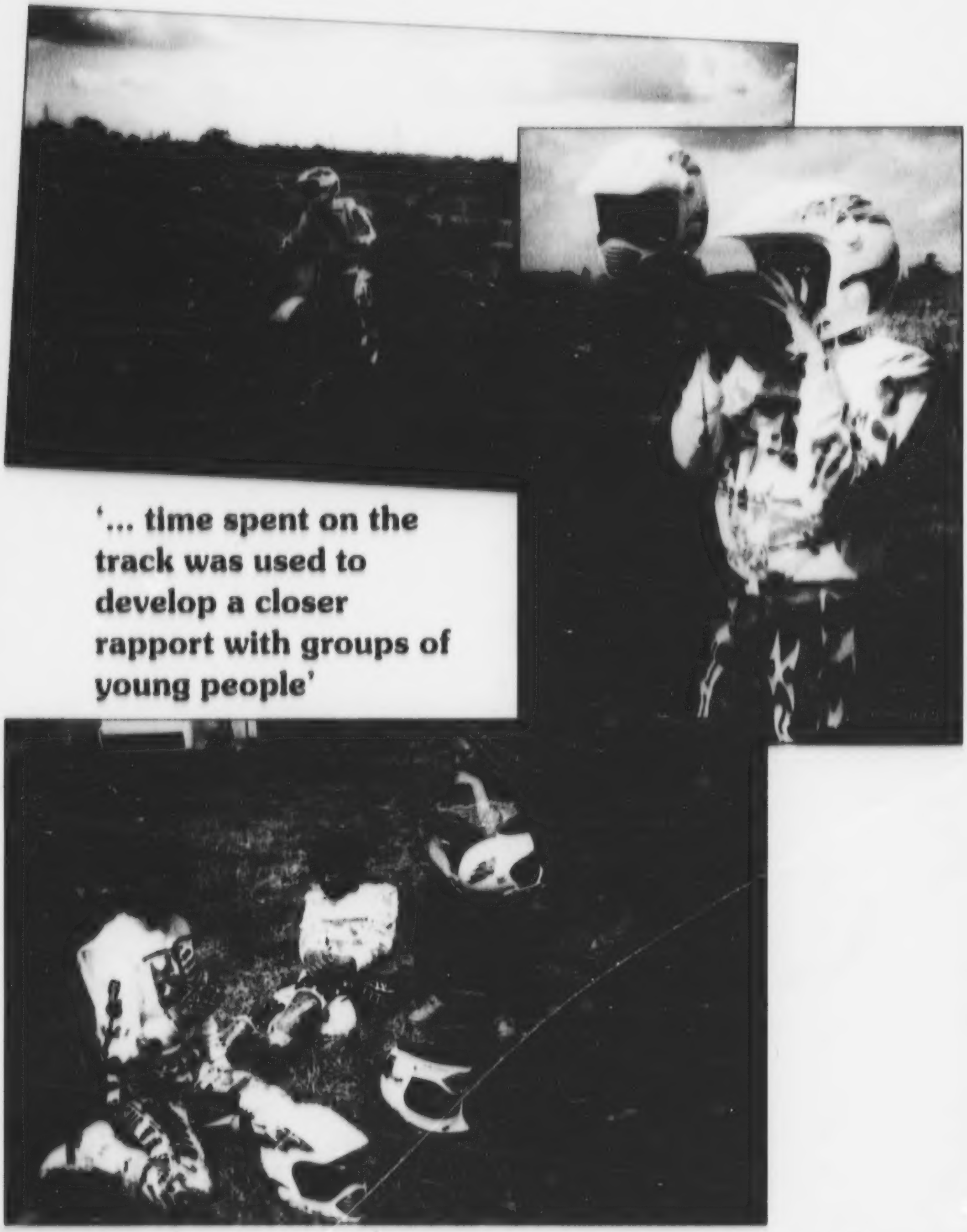
Because these activities depended on the interests of the youths who chose to interact with the workers, they were inevitably male-orientated. The team was conscious of the need to get more young women involved, but the problem was how? Young women were less visible on the streets, less vocal when asked about their interests and understandably less trusting of strangers. However, the football matches organised in the local park were beginning to attract a number of young women who came along to spectate. This was an ideal means of making contact with them.

‘Scrambling was a chance to do some vital one-to-one and small group work ...’



Scrambling, summer ’94

Photos: BDYWP



'... time spent on the track was used to develop a closer rapport with groups of young people'

Scrambling, summer '94

Photos: BDYWP

> At the time when we started doing the football, the young women were on the perimeters. We'd organise the football and the fellas would come down and do the big macho bit playing football and all the girls would be on the sidelines. So while Ray was doing the football, I'd be on the sidelines talking to the young women. And that's literally how I got the young women involved. It was extremely contrived, but it worked. I knew exactly what we were doing because of all the planning and preparation we put in. Up until then I'd found it really difficult with that group. I used to go along and have a quick chat with them but that would be it. But when there was actually something happening like the football, they began to show an interest. So that's when I started taking them out on their own. Some of the young women in that particular group got involved in our first summer camp.
>
> Team review, December '94

Recording and Monitoring

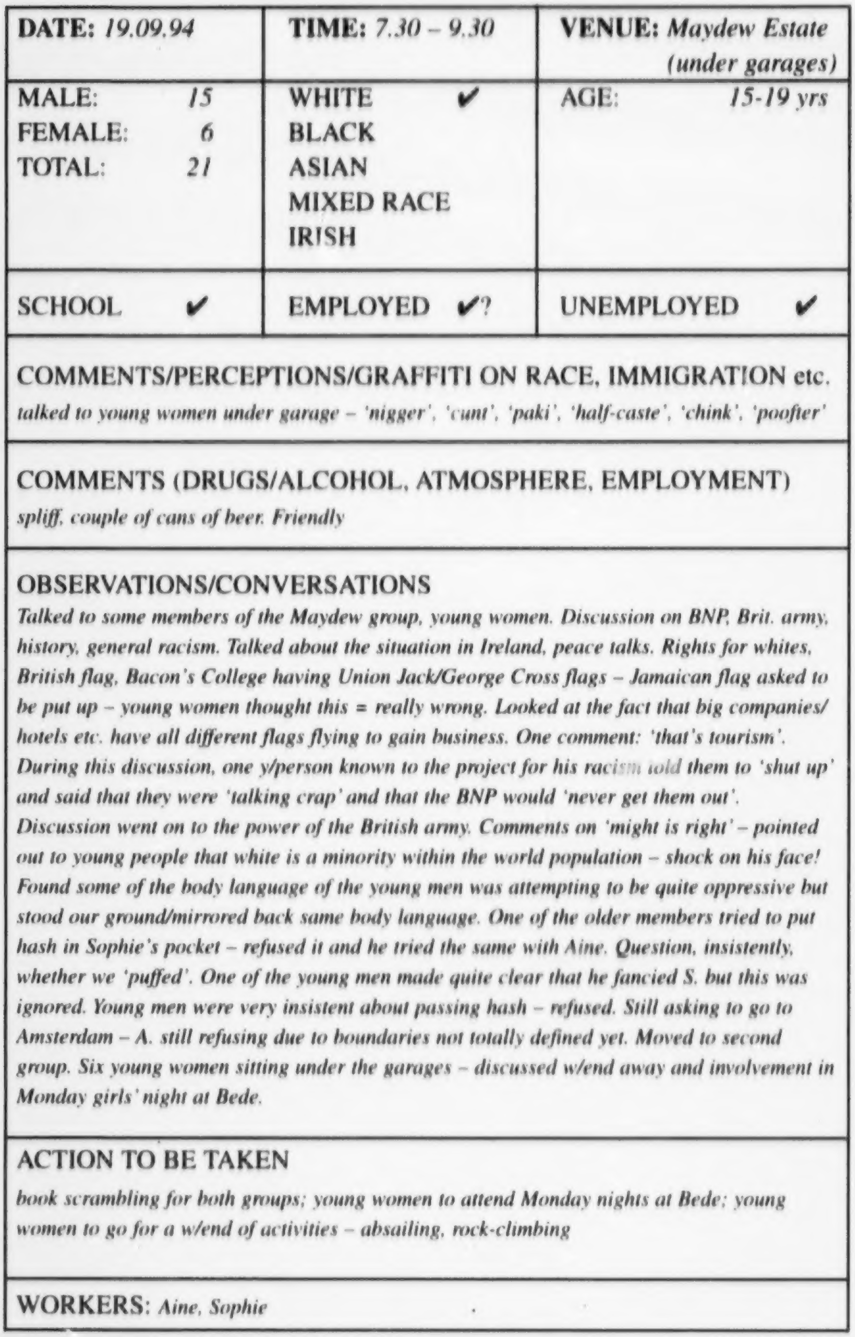
The need to keep a visual record of the work the project was doing, and to involve the young people in an ongoing evaluation led to the use of a video camera, loaned from the Media Department at Southwark College. This seemed an ideal way of attracting young people, who liked the idea of being filmed as they were talking to the workers. As the project developed, the young people were encouraged to make frequent use of the camcorder to film each other and record their own activities. The results are part of a 'video diary' that was developed to illustrate the project's work.

Although using the camera proved an effective magnet during those early months, and a method that would continue to be employed to record progress over the three years, it was not without its drawbacks. Young people would sometimes 'play to the camera', making it difficult to ascertain how much of their banter was play-acting. It was also a big responsibility having to carry around such an expensive piece of loaned equipment, a lesson that was learnt the hard way when the camera was stolen during the early months. A more reliable method of record-keeping was clearly needed to supplement the filming. Written records, developed at the start of the project, provided the Advisory Committee with details of the numbers, ages, gender and ethnicity of the various groups of young people on request, and formed the basis of six-monthly progress reports to the NYA [fig. 10].

A monthly summary of activities was prepared by the detached team, helping them to single out the approaches and strategies that were proving most effective and to analyse any drawbacks. Regular meetings every two months with members of the Advisory Committee ensured that there was an ongoing dialogue about how they could pursue the project's aims.

As the team stabilised, it was possible to introduce regular planning meetings and debriefings. These were held before and soon after each session, enabling them to target particular gangs or estates and share out the work between them. These debriefings ensured that the workers could exchange information and responses they had made to particular comments or any issues the young people had raised with them. They also provided space for the workers to swap ideas and generally support each other, essential given the nature of the work. Racist, sexist or homophobic comments did not only apply to people 'out there' – they also affected members of the team, and could be provocative or hurtful. By making room for them to talk, these meetings had both a supervisory and therapeutic function.

The project's approach to recording and monitoring progress was therefore to rely on the continuous evaluation of the work, in order to learn the lessons from any successes or setbacks as it went along. Some, like the difficulties in establishing a stable team of workers, were largely beyond anyone's control, despite effectively hindering the development of a relationship with the youth on the street during the first eight months. Other setbacks, like the theft of the video, had to be carefully analysed so that such mistakes were not repeated in the future.



DATE: *19.09.94*	**TIME:** *7.30 – 9.30*	**VENUE:** *Maydew Estate (under garages)*
MALE: *15* FEMALE: *6* TOTAL: *21*	WHITE ✔ BLACK ASIAN MIXED RACE IRISH	AGE: *15-19 yrs*
SCHOOL ✔	EMPLOYED ✔?	UNEMPLOYED ✔

COMMENTS/PERCEPTIONS/GRAFFITI ON RACE, IMMIGRATION etc.

talked to young women under garage – 'nigger', 'cunt', 'paki', 'half-caste', 'chink', 'poofter'

COMMENTS (DRUGS/ALCOHOL, ATMOSPHERE, EMPLOYMENT)

spliff, couple of cans of beer. Friendly

OBSERVATIONS/CONVERSATIONS

Talked to some members of the Maydew group, young women. Discussion on BNP, Brit. army, history, general racism. Talked about the situation in Ireland, peace talks. Rights for whites, British flag, Bacon's College having Union Jack/George Cross flags – Jamaican flag asked to be put up – young women thought this = really wrong. Looked at the fact that big companies/ hotels etc. have all different flags flying to gain business. One comment: 'that's tourism'. During this discussion, one y/person known to the project for his racism told them to 'shut up' and said that they were 'talking crap' and that the BNP would 'never get them out'. Discussion went on to the power of the British army. Comments on 'might is right' – pointed out to young people that white is a minority within the world population – shock on his face! Found some of the body language of the young men was attempting to be quite oppressive but stood our ground/mirrored back same body language. One of the older members tried to put hash in Sophie's pocket – refused it and he tried the same with Aine. Question, insistently, whether we 'puffed'. One of the young men made quite clear that he fancied S. but this was ignored. Young men were very insistent about passing hash – refused. Still asking to go to Amsterdam – A. still refusing due to boundaries not totally defined yet. Moved to second group. Six young women sitting under the garages – discussed w/end away and involvement in Monday girls' night at Bede.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN

book scrambling for both groups; young women to attend Monday nights at Bede; young women to go for a w/end of activities – absailing, rock-climbing

WORKERS: *Aine, Sophie*

Fig. 10: Extract from detached youth worker's nightly record, 19.9.94

YEAR TWO: SUCCESSES AND SETBACKS

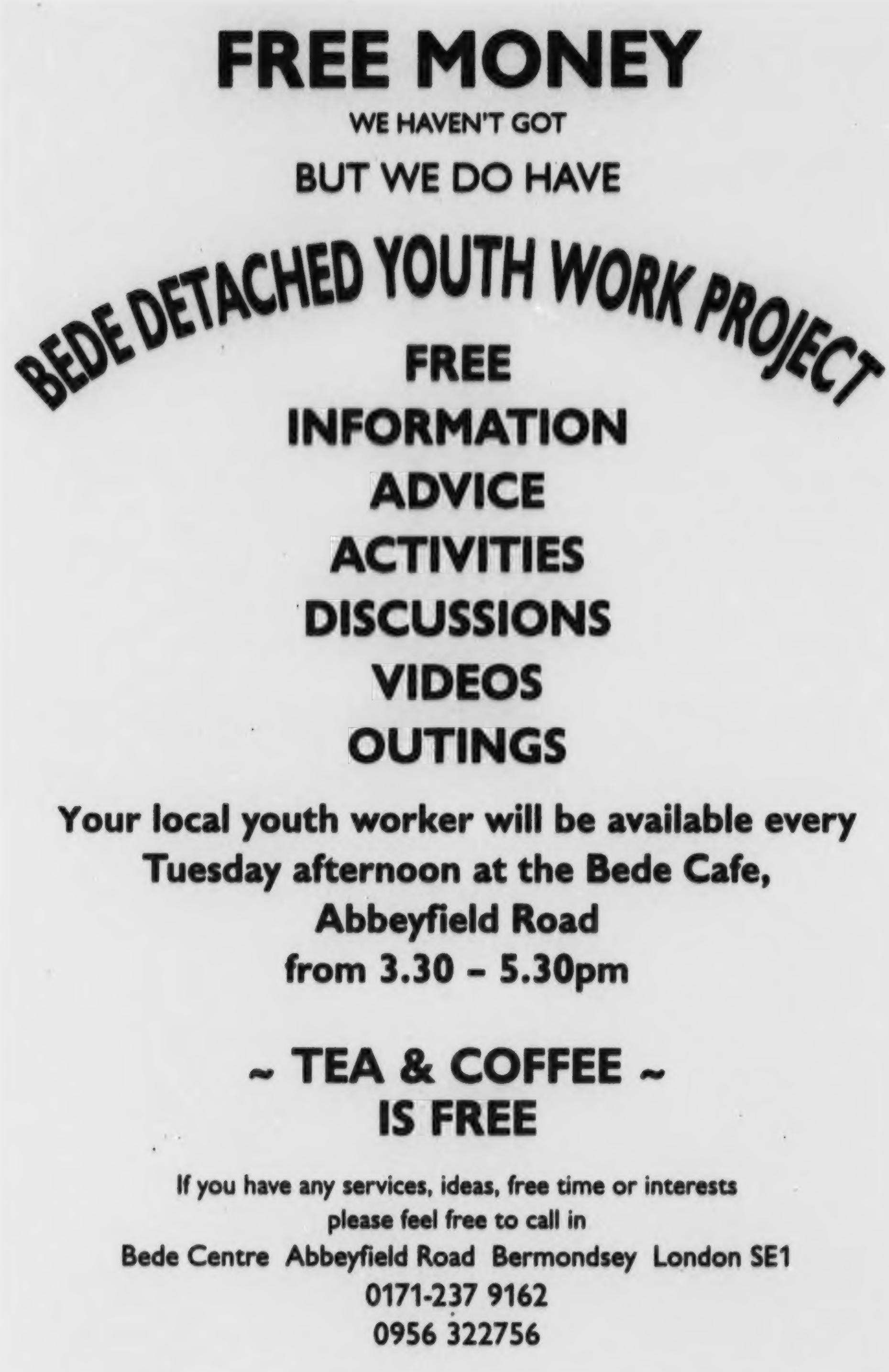
Action and Implementation

The second year of the project was a period of action and implementation, when theories had to be put into practice. By the middle of 1994, the detached team had stabilised and the two youth workers (Aine, assisted by Ray and joined later that year by Sophie and Santi) had succeeded in establishing their presence and credibility on the street. This had been achieved by maintaining a consistent presence in the area in the evenings and at weekends; by continuing to organise activities and outings on request that strengthened their rapport with the young people; and by entering into interactions and non-confrontational conversations that covered the full scope of their experience.

This willingness to address all aspects of young people's experience was important, since their racism could not be separated from the many other problems they were facing. Alcohol and drug use, petty crime, truancy, school exclusions, joblessness, homelessness and difficulties with parents also featured prominently in many of the young people's lives, and it was by addressing these issues that the team was able to gain their trust and confidence.

This meant that there was much more to the job than the time they were spending on the streets. Apart from organising a schedule of activities that included go-karting, scrambling, bowling, ice-skating, camping trips and the summer holiday scheme, the team was also busy fulfilling other roles. Their networking efforts, for example, had begun to pay off. They were on good speaking terms with many of the parents, had made links with members of local tenants' associations, and were in regular contact with families and local voluntary groups. Verbal feedback from parents and others in the community indicated that their work with young people was gaining local respect and they could even claim the support of the local police, who indicated that the level of youth crime in the Bermondsey area had fallen by 40 per cent between January and June 1994.

Among the most encouraging indications that the project was beginning to make some headway was the growth in the number of young people who were getting involved. Between April 1994 and March 1995, the number of contacts swelled, with many young people taking part in the activities and workshops that were organised as part of the summer holiday scheme [fig. 11] as well as ongoing work with the young women following the setting up of the girls' group that met with Sophie every Monday evening. During the summer months, when many of the local youths were to be found in Southwark Park, juggling and football



FREE MONEY

WE HAVEN'T GOT

BUT WE DO HAVE

BEDE DETACHED YOUTH WORK PROJECT

FREE

INFORMATION

ADVICE

ACTIVITIES

DISCUSSIONS

VIDEOS

OUTINGS

Your local youth worker will be available every Tuesday afternoon at the Bede Cafe, Abbeyfield Road from 3.30 – 5.30pm

~ TEA & COFFEE ~
IS FREE

If you have any services, ideas, free time or interests
please feel free to call in
Bede Centre Abbeyfield Road Bermondsey London SE1
0171-237 9162
0956 322756

Fig. 11: BDYWP summer holiday scheme flyer, August '94

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became an attraction for many of them. There was also plenty of scope for organising trips and activities, as well as residential camps. The extent of the contact with local young people was reflected in the figures which show a steady growth over that 12-month period (figs. 12 and 13).

Supporting and Befriending

Supporting and befriending young people were key roles during this period, and the team found itself using its counselling, advising and advocacy skills to the full. As the only full-time worker, young people would often phone Aine on the mobile phone wanting some advice or to meet up for a chat. Sometimes, this informal counselling and advice work led to advocacy – making contact with a solicitor or a parent, speaking to a drugs adviser at Release or accompanying a homeless young person to the social services office to help them sort out their housing problems. There was a cautious dialogue to be maintained with the home beat officers, who would at times pass on their concerns or information about young people they were in contact with. On other occasions, a character reference might be needed for someone they had arrested. There were also several individuals with specific problems with the law or their parents who needed ongoing support, involving other agencies or family members.

> This particular young fellow was taking a hell of a lot of Speed and Ray had been talking to him about it informally, but he didn't feel he had the in-depth knowledge about drugs to do more. So we agreed that Santi would take him out and spend some quality time with him, and he took him round to the local drugs project. When this lad saw all the heroin addicts and the state some of them were in, it completely freaked him out. Santi also visited his mum and took her some of the information leaflets they'd picked up when they were there and talked to her about how she could support him. Up until then, the mum was all for throwing him out – it was 'if you want to take those bloody drugs, get out of here'. There was a lot of domestic violence at home from the father, and the son would get violent when he was on Speed too, so his mother and sisters were terrified. When he stopped taking the Speed, it was like Bede could do no wrong – they thought we were wonderful. And the lad himself turned round to us and said that was the first time a black person had ever done anything for him.
>
> Team review, March '95

This kind of work was often reactive – about waiting for something to happen and then responding with advice and whatever help and support could be offered. However, it was also possible to work in a more interventionist way – for example, befriending a particular young person and trying to influence them in the hope of preventing them from making inappropriate life choices.

> L. was incredibly dependent and very insecure, always coming out with racist or sexist comments, always seeking credibility in the group. But the fact is, he was a

BDYWP: Young People's Age Profile (End of March '95)

[numbers in brackets show the approximate size of the groups]

Rennie Group [20]	12 to 15 years
Younger Manor Group [15]	13 to 16 years
Older Manor Group [12]	16 to 18 years
Maydew Group [25]	15 to 20 years
Young Women's Group [10]	14 to 17 years
Somali Young Men's Group [15]	16 to 18 years

Fig. 12: Young people's age profile, end of March '95

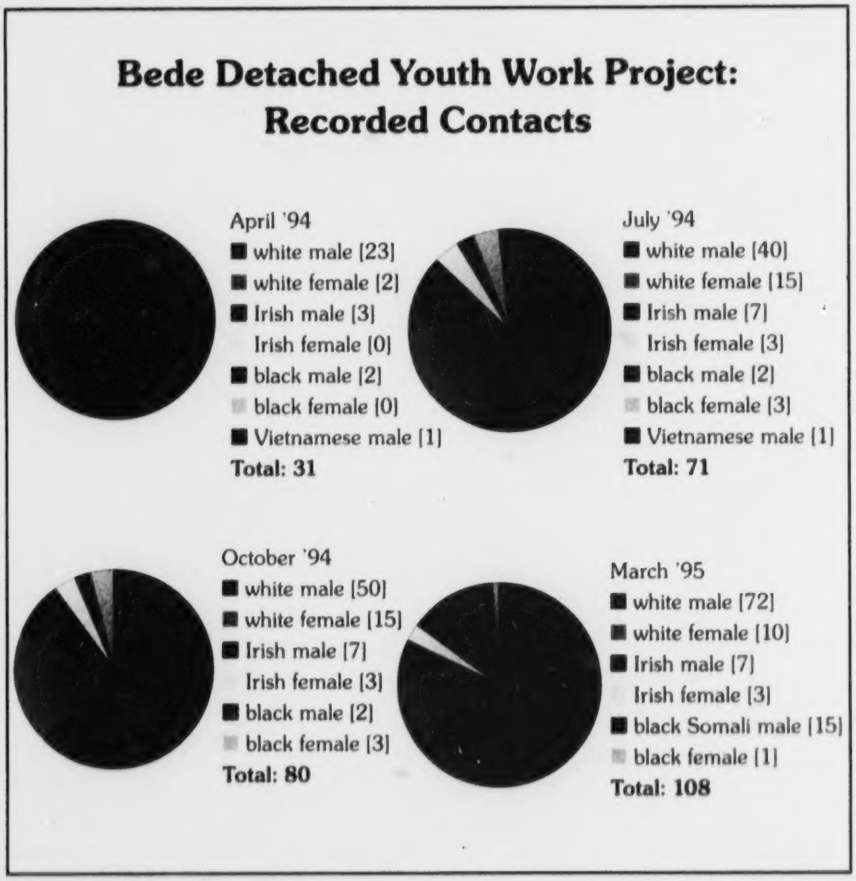
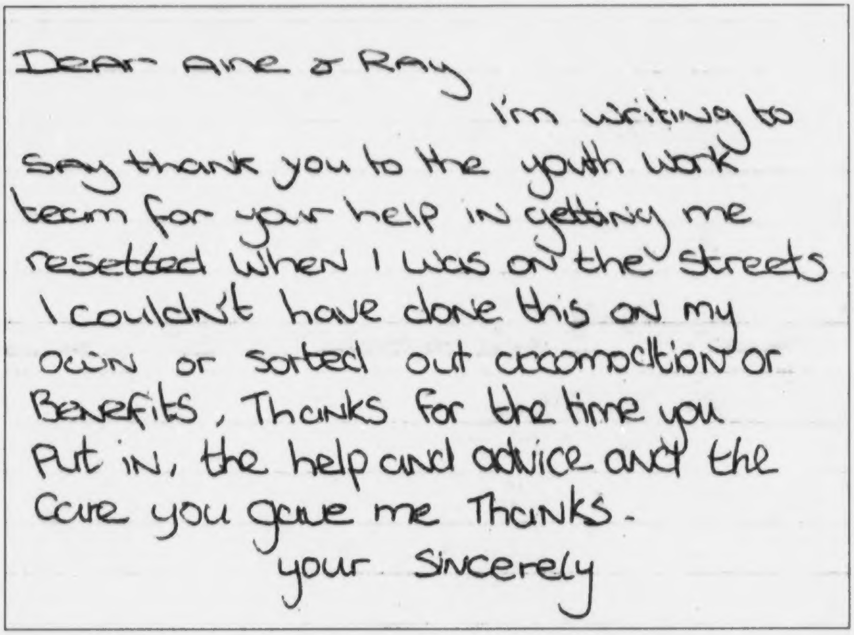


Fig. 13: BDYWP: number of recorded contacts, taken from *Annual Report*, March '95

> complete idiot and the others were laughing at him but he couldn't see it. We sat on that kid for over a year and our approach was firm yet gentle. He was heading for ruin, getting into drugs, dabbling in a bit of drug dealing, and I'd say to him, 'L., you're on a road to nowhere, think about where you're heading, you're going to end up doing time, and for what?' I wouldn't mince my words, I was upfront with him because he needed an adult-to-adult relationship and you can't have that without honesty. He was worried because I knew his mum and he thought I'd go straight round and tell her everything, but we operated on the basis of complete confidentiality. I do believe he took on a good deal of what we said, because he stopped getting into trouble with the police after that. And when we took that same group of older lads from his estate on a day trip to France and organised the football match with the French team, despite the fact that they were all going on about 'frog-bashing' before the game, L. was the one who jumped in and stopped them from fighting.
>
> Team review, December '95

The supportive relationships that were established through these interventions not only raised the project's status in the eyes of parents and workers from other agencies; they also made the young people themselves more receptive to the project's hidden agenda, which was to confront and challenge their racism whenever the opportunity arose.



Dear Aine & Ray
I'm writing to
say thank you to the youth work
team for your help in getting me
resetted when I was on the streets
I couldn't have done this on my
own or sorted out accomodation or
Benefits, Thanks for the time you
Put in, the help and advice and the
care you gave me Thanks.
your Sincerely

Fig. 14: Letter from D.

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Challenging Racism

Whatever the nature of the activity, whether a day trip to France or the day-to-day interactions with young people in Bermondsey, racism was always on the agenda – whether in the form of casual remarks or deliberately provocative comments.

> They are constantly being fed the stuff about unemployment and housing, so a lot of the conversations are about jobs and houses, and often they'll say things deliberately to provoke us. But a lot of that provocation is them really saying 'look, just give us your time, just talk to us and give us your attention' because nobody else has valued them enough to stand and actually have a conversation with them ... But they realise we've stuck with them, we don't dismiss them and we don't write them off. One of the young men actually said to me 'you lot have stuck it out, haven't you – you don't turn your back on us and walk away, you don't think we're all bad'. And I said 'now who told you that?' – 'oh, everyone says it' ...
>
> Team debriefing, October '94

The young people's views mostly reflected local attitudes. Often the focus was on the perceived 'advantages' of being black.

> They honestly believe from their parents and from other people in the community that to get a house or a flat from Southwark Council you have to either be black or Asian. And as proof, they quote the equal opportunities statements they've seen in the paper where the jobs are advertised. They'll shove the paper under your nose and go 'look, it says it here ...' So that's the kind of thing they're coming out with – jobs and houses. They feel that because they are white, if they come out with a statement that's racist, they'll get done for it yet a black person could come out with a similar statement and not get done for it. So they have this false sense of injustice – 'it's not fucking fair'.
>
> Team debriefing, October '94

When challenging such attitudes, it was important to acknowledge this sense of injustice without pandering to racist views. The team's agreed approach was to explore with them how little they had to gain from blaming black people for a political situation that ordinary people were not responsible for; and to stress that, whatever the prevailing stereotypes, many black people shared exactly the same social and economic problems as they did. As one local resident put it:

> If you're on the bottom of the pile, it's always nice to have someone else to kick. Around here we don't get the services and environment that we deserve, and we don't get the life chances and choices that we deserve – and if there's someone to blame who isn't the real problem, it serves this government and the society well that black people are threatened by white people and are made into scapegoats. But the real issues of housing, schooling, health, all those issues that affect

> white people, are just as relevant to black people and there's so much common ground. But while you divide people, they can't unite and they can't fight the real problem.
>
> Local resident, April '94

The team had to both time and measure their responses, so that they could challenge attitudes without destroying the relationship of trust that had been so carefully established over the previous year.

> The agreement was that we would challenge every racist statement. But we did it in such a way that the young person didn't feel they were backed up against the wall. And that way of working proved successful in the long run. We'd talk to them, we'd say let's discuss this, let's get to the bottom of it and in the end we got them to see that they had a problem ...
>
> Team review, March '95

Challenging racism took the form of direct or indirect, premeditated or spontaneous responses to whatever came up in their conversations. Humour played an important part, as did the workers' individual life experiences – Ray's knowledge of the NF and BNP; Santi's experience as a black man who had grown up in the East End and his detailed knowledge of drugs and other issues that affected them; and Aine's 15 years of working with young people, including a project in Belfast.

The workers were also able to draw on their own knowledge of history and of the young people's backgrounds to reinforce the messages they were giving out. Ironically, several young people had names that indicated Irish ancestry yet their views towards the Irish were often as vehement as they were towards other, more visible, minorities. The fact that two members of the team were Irish enabled them to confront the anti-Irish racism that was frequently voiced. It also gave them insight into the racism faced by black people.

> A lot of young people really see themselves to be very white, very English and true Bermondsey, like 'I'm a true Bermondsey sort'. But a lot of their names aren't English – they're Irish or Polish or Vietnamese. And when I'm trying to explore all this with them I say 'well, let's take a look at your own history, let's take a look at your Irish history and the history of the Irish in Bermondsey down the docks in the 1800s and what they went through up to the '50s when we had the posters on the doors "no Irish, no blacks, no dogs".' And I talk to them about the natural alliances between the black community, the Asian community and the Irish community. A lot of that is about shared values – the extended family unit, the respect we have for each other, how we talk to older people in our communities, the struggles we've had, the whole thing with British imperialism.
>
> Team review, April '94

The confidence of team members to address the project's primary aim and confront racist attitudes increased as they saw individual young people responding positively by beginning to question their own and others' assumptions. They were aware, however, that for many of the young people racism was the norm at home rather than the exception.

> I was talking to one of the mothers about the project and what we're trying to do and she was going 'Oh, I do understand what you're saying, now don't get me wrong, I'm not racist, but ...' Of course, you usually know what's coming then, but even I was shocked with what she came out with next. She went on about people coming into the country and how they should really have to work before they get free NHS treatment and she goes 'now, don't get me wrong, I'm not racist, I wouldn't stop them coming into the country, but in my opinion Asian and African women should be forcibly sterilised before they come in, so they don't have any more kids that'll be a burden on the state'. She went on and on like this, and this was with her two sons of 13 and 14 standing there listening to what she was saying.
>
> Team debriefing, October '94

By listening to the young people's own arguments, presenting them with alternative viewpoints and providing them with as much information as possible about the origins and realities of racism, the hope was that they would in turn feel able to question these parental attitudes, if only in their own heads.

> It's not just the young people we're trying to challenge here, it's their conditioning. We were having a conversation with P. and in the middle of it, he said to us 'I really respect you two because you know what I'm talking about and you don't shout at us or judge us and you're quite happy to listen to us and we can talk it through'. He's obviously not used to that. We actually sat there with him for hours and we were beginning to smash all these illusions that he had and his preconceived ideas and his racism, we were actually turning it all on its head. And I know that the most difficult thing for that young man was to go back home afterwards, because his dad was saying one thing and we were contradicting him and saying another, and you could see that he was grappling with it, trying to hold on to his existing ideas. If you'd met the father, you'd know where all these ideas were coming from. It was obvious that he'd discussed things with his dad, because during the conversation he was coming out with stuff about groups like the BNP and the NF and how they were mad and that, and he'd say 'yeah, my dad says this, my dad says that'. The impression I got is that he's actually talked to his dad about joining one of these organisations before.
>
> Team review, December '94

If they were to be able to challenge effectively, it was important to listen to the young people without immediately condemning them. In order not to stifle the conversation – or, as was even more likely, allow them to feed off the power that came from playing to an audience – the workers often found it necessary to adopt a careful approach that encouraged discussion without sanctioning the views they were expressing.

> I had a group of lads to do some scrambling on the motorbikes, it was brilliant, it was the older group of lads from the Abbeyfield Estate and we'd just had a great

> day and a lot of the lads were beginning to confide in us. You get all their fears and anxieties and their violence towards people, what they don't like about people, etc ... anyway we talked about the racism and they were saying 'well, that's just the way it is round here, blacks don't mix with whites, we don't mix with blacks and it's always been like that'. So I said 'but why? Talk to me about it, because I don't understand and I'm trying to understand'. This conversation went on and on and we didn't challenge directly, we just talked about it ...
>
> Team review, April '94

The team was rarely under any illusions about the limitations of what they were trying to achieve. They were aware that their efforts were countered daily by other, negative influences and that old views and habits die hard. Every so often an incident would occur that reminded them of this fact and emphasised the dangers of becoming complacent.

> They weren't involved in the actual incident, but if an attack had taken place, they probably would have joined in. There were about seventy or eighty young people surrounding these two young black women and everyone was gobbing on them, spitting at them. I couldn't see anyone saying 'no, this is wrong', we were the only ones standing out and saying 'no, this ain't going to happen, we're going to escort you out of the park and get you home safely'. If we hadn't been walking through the park at the right time, someone could have been badly hurt. It just goes to show that once we're out of earshot, that's the kind of thing that can go on.
>
> Team debriefing, September '95

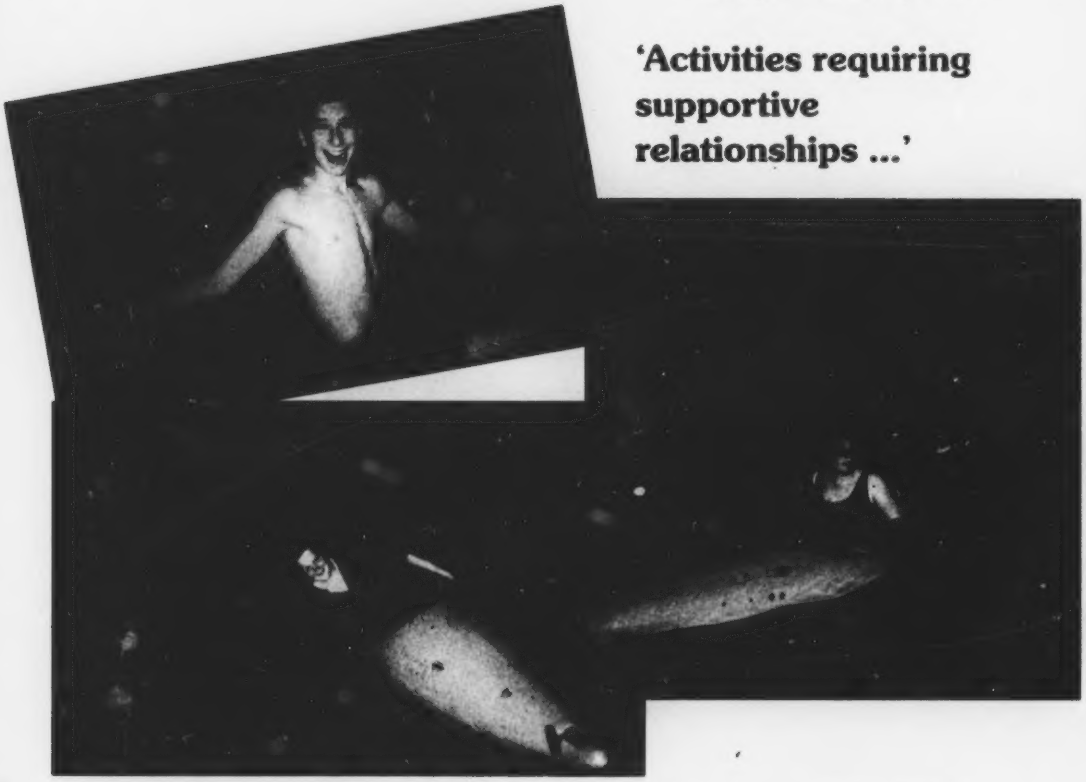
Incidents such as these were depressing for the team, for they suggested that their efforts were being wasted. Team debriefings were a way of ensuring that any setbacks of this kind were discussed fully and resulted in proactive responses that were calculated to prevent a recurrence.

> I opened up the conversation and I said to them, 'there's some bad feeling going down between you lot and the Somalians, what's it all about?' and then Santi chipped in and started talking about how the Somalis must be feeling and how we weren't accusing any of them, but it's not good for the area. He said to them 'look it's not good for you and it's certainly not good for them. If you respect their culture, they might respect yours, but if you don't want to respect them, don't go round giving them grief, don't go round kicking on doors and abusing people.' It seemed to have an effect, because it stopped after that. They knew we were on the case and that it wasn't going totally unnoticed, and that made a difference. That was probably more powerful, us stepping in like that, than the police coming in. If the police had got involved, it probably would have just escalated ...
>
> Team review, December '95

Because racism, sexism and homophobia often come as a package, the team's endeavours to tackle the young people's racism went hand in hand with a policy of challenging sexist and homophobic comments, and drawing analogies between their attitudes towards black people, women and gays and lesbians.

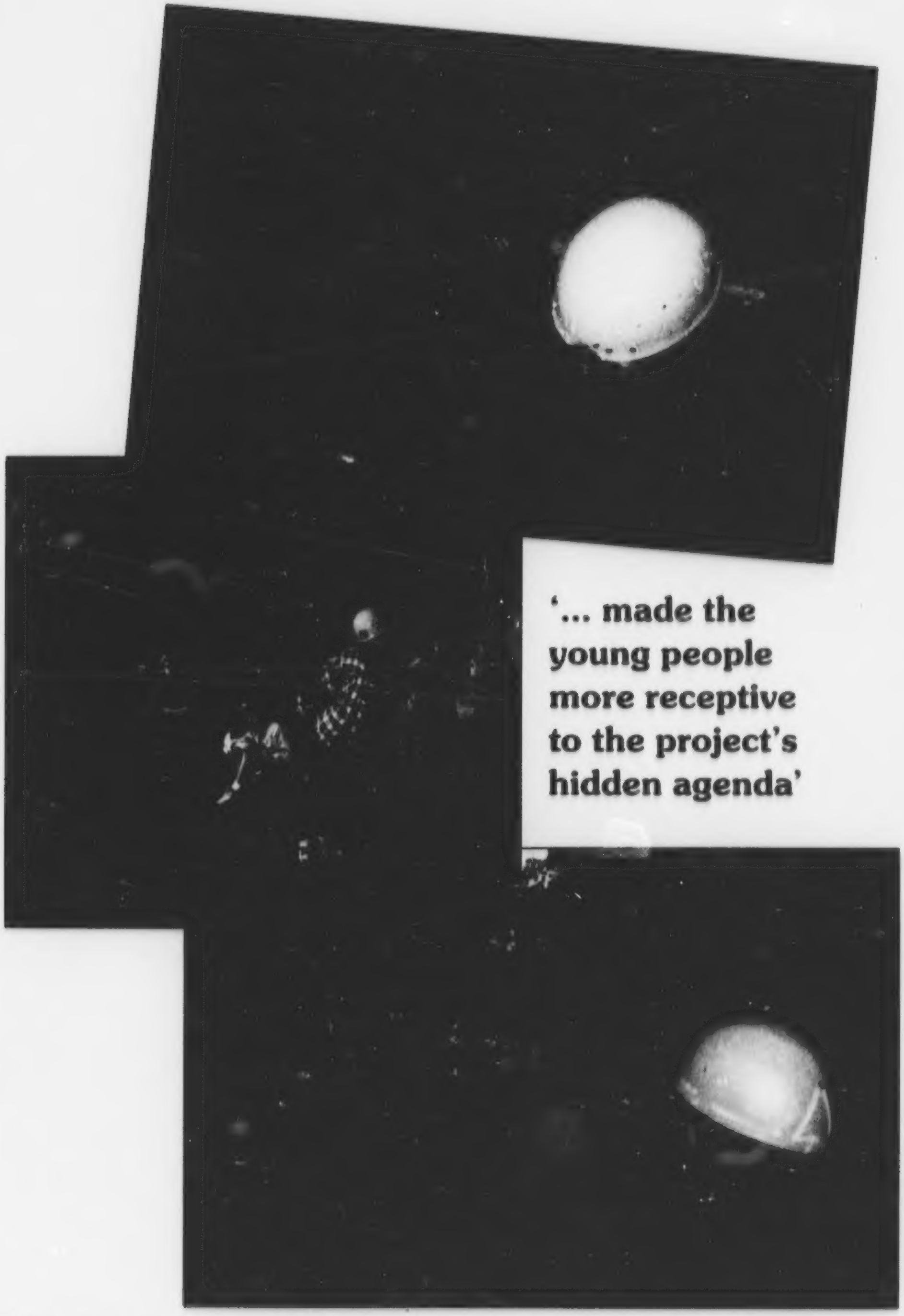
> When we went away on camp, there was one particular girl who was very homophobic and this rumour went round that one of the workers was a lesbian and it had got them all chatting – they'd come up and whisper 'did you know so-and-so's a lesbian?' and we said, 'well yeah, she did say that, didn't she, so obviously she is'. We did it very matter of fact, and just let our relationship with those workers, and those workers' personality and their competence shine through. When we got back, there was a conversation about black people and she said 'hang on a minute, not all black people are horrible, we went away with M. and M. was doing this and M. was doing that', and then they started on gays and queers and it was 'no, but C. was really nice, you should never have a go at someone because of something about them unless you know the person inside'. This was what she said, we couldn't believe it. She was the most racist and homophobic young woman I've ever met in my life before that, you know, she would never go out with a black person, she thought queers were perverts, yet at the end of it she was saying to her peers, 'no, hang on a minute, you're wrong ...'
>
> Local youth worker, April '94

'Activities requiring supportive relationships ...'



Canoeing, summer '94

Photos: BDYWP



'... made the young people more receptive to the project's hidden agenda'

Potholing and abseiling, August 1994

Photos: BDYWP

'There was plenty of scope for organising trips and activities, including residential camps ...'

Summer camp '95

Photos: BDYWP

Working with Gangs

On each of the local estates gangs were operating, in some cases involving boys as young as 11 or 12 who spent the bulk of their time with older brothers or peers as old as 18 or 19. Given the peer pressures that ruled their relations and the vulnerability of younger gang members, the team set about consciously targeting the gang leaders out of a belief that if key players could be won over they could, in turn, have an important influence on their peers.

> The older group off the estate was stoning black people on the streets, dumping rubbish on their cars, putting excrement through letter boxes – and P. was actively organising those attacks, he was the one who was sorting it all out. But we started working on that relationship with him and through him we eventually started to get through to the others. Now there's one or two within that group who can't handle that, who are still trying to assert themselves, but if P.'s not having it, they'll not try anything at all. So we actually pinpointed him and worked on having one-to-one, mature, adult-to-adult conversations with him.
>
> When we met them first they were chucking stones, they were hyper, they were aggressive and they were over the top about everything – everything was exaggerated. Then gradually we started breaking down the barriers and handling them one-to-one, like sitting in MacDonald's for two hours talking about travelling, talking about their fears and their angers, and the conversation would go all over the place. P. had actually done a lot of travelling, he'd been to Thailand, and he was talking about how frightened he was in case he got stitched up and somebody planted drugs on him. So I said 'well, why don't you look at that experience and compare it with what's happening here in Britain, where you've got black people getting deported all the time and black people like Joy Gardner getting killed as a result of the immigration laws'.
>
> I could see that young man really struggling, trying not to have to agree with what we were saying. Since then I've had some amazing conversations with him about how racism works and I actually saw the benefits of that one time when we were coming back in the minibus and his friends were all feeding into the racism in the back of the bus and he just did not get involved in it. They were all sitting around in the back of the minibus trying to get his reaction and he just wasn't buying into the racism at all. He just sat and looked out of the window. We'd been working at building up his confidence through the scrambling all afternoon, and that young fellow was feeling really good about himself ...
>
> Team review, December '94

Although one-to-one work of this kind was often gratifying, working with large groups of young men could be frustrating and intimidating, particularly when they had been taking cocaine or, as was most often the case, drinking alcohol and smoking 'puff' (cannabis). On such occasions, not allowing oneself to be cowed by displays of aggression and machismo became a priority, as did the maintenance of clear boundaries.

> The other night Aine and I were surrounded by a group of about ten young men who were off their heads, and for about an hour they were constantly going on and on in our face about the BNP. They went right through from the British Empire, the British army, you name it, and it got to the point where we just had to cut the conversation off. Their whole body language was extremely aggressive, extremely confrontational but I was making the point 'look, you're not threatening me by all this' and one young man, he tried to keep eye contact but he couldn't. That was one of the first nights I'd come across such aggressive, confrontational body language. I didn't give it back to them, I just stood my ground because I knew I had to respond, but very quietly, not reacting to their anger ...
>
> Team debriefing, January '95

Eventually, these tactics began to show results. Although there were some who clung stubbornly to their racism by refusing to be drawn into confrontations and focusing on those young men whom the rest of the gang looked up to, the team was slowly creating the basis for peer pressure to operate at a future time, when they were no longer around to intervene.

> We were getting into the minibus and one of them saw Santi and he goes 'I ain't getting in the van with that coon' and he walked off. When the gang leader heard about this, he said 'nobody's going to say that about my mate' and storms off down the road, knocks on his front door and effectively told him 'fuck off, Santi's not a coon, he's my mate'.
>
> Team debriefing, January '95

Developing Shared Values and Approaches

In the workers' relationships with young people, however racist their views or anti-social their behaviour, consistency and respect were key words. During the course of team meetings held regularly three or four times a week to plan and evaluate the work, these and other shared values emerged which defined their practice and guided their interactions with the young people.

BDYWP: Team Values

- consistent behaviour
- respect for individuals
- not belittling individuals in front of their peers
- avoiding sarcasm and ridicule
- avoiding angry exchanges or physical confrontation
- meeting promises and commitments
- punctuality
- negotiated rules or contracts when taking groups out
- strict adherence to any rules or contracts made

For example, there was agreement that challenging would not involve putting individuals down or belittling them in front of their peers; that any undertakings made by members of the team should be realistic and realisable; and that commitments, once made, should be met. If any of the workers arranged to meet a group of young people, they were expected to turn up on time and to deliver whatever had been promised. When outings or activities were organised, the necessary groundrules about drinking, smoking or behaviour were to be negotiated in advance, and the young people consulted and actively involved. Through the consistency of their everyday practice, the team hoped to demonstrate that each young person they were in contact with was valued as an individual, however much they might disagree with their opinions.

Detached Youth Project
Procedures for Dealing with Drugs

1. Detached workers do not supply cigarette papers, tobacco, cannabis or any hard or soft drugs
2. Detached workers do not receive any cigarette papers, tobacco, cannabis or any hard or soft drugs
3. Detached workers do not support or encourage use of drugs
4. Detached workers have a responsibility to inform a young person about the drug they are taking:
    - what is in the drug;
    - what are the side effects;
    - where is the nearest water supply;
    - where can a young person go if they need to 'chill out';
    - where is the nearest local drug project.
5. Detached workers have an obligation to inform and advise if a young person is under 14-years-old – a parent could sue for negligence if any harm comes to their child while in your presence
6. If a young person is using drugs while on the premises, the worker can be charged for aiding or abetting or could be seen to be encouraging drug use
7. If a worker finds drugs, they can be charged with possession

Best thing to do: have an agreement to hand drugs over to someone in authority or the police or flush them down the toilet ...

Fig. 15: BDYWP: procedures for dealing with drugs

Bede Detached Youth Work Project Contract

The Bede Detached Project works towards providing a safe environment for all young people in the area we work in.

In order to ensure this, we expect that each young person accepts and agrees to our boundaries.

1. I agree not to be racist or sexist -- i.e. no abusive language, actions or any forms of intimidating behaviour
2. I agree to respect other people's culture and traditions
3. I agree not to be involved in any form of drug misuse – this includes alcohol
4. I agree to respect the property of Bede Detached Project and Bede House Association. I also agree to respect public property when in the company of the Bede Detached Project

We ask that all young people who choose to make use of the services of the Bede Detached Project show respect and a responsible attitude.

In the event of police involvement, parents or guardians will be notified immediately.

Aine Woods
Senior Worker

Signed: Young Person ....

Signed: Parent/Guardian ....

Address ....

....

....

Tel .... BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE

Fig. 16: BDYWP Contract

> You can have a good time and still be very firm with them, you can still say 'no, you're bang out of order here, this is not acceptable and you know why it's not acceptable'. But you make it a constructive criticism. That's one of the things that's contributed to the respect that we've got.
>
> Team review, December '95

Because of the nature of detached work, which can be threatening as well as rewarding, clear working guidelines and boundaries are vital. There were frequent discussions within the team about how best to respond to the young men's habitual use of drink and drugs, for example, which were used at times to test their tolerance levels to the limit. Team consistency was important, and they were aware that if the rules about drinking alcohol or smoking 'puff' in the minibus were not strictly adhered to, the project itself would be put at risk [fig. 15].

When trips were organised, in addition to getting their parents to sign the consent forms, young people were asked to sign their own contracts, committing themselves to behave in a way that was acceptable to the group and respectful of others. Although these contracts were not always easy to enforce, they enabled the team to discuss and negotiate boundaries, and acted as a tangible reference point when these boundaries were overstepped [fig. 16].

The safety guidelines developed by Southwark Youth Service were also carefully adhered to. They included guidance about ID cards; valuables; the use of mobile phones; relationships with the police and the law; and the issue of personal safety, which involved always working in pairs and making sure that they knew where and how to contact each other [fig. 17].

Working with Black Young People

Unlike many other parts of London, black young people along with those of mixed parentage or from Asian or other minority ethnic groups are growing up in Bermondsey as a distinct minority. Their schoolmates and peers are likely to be predominantly white, and through their playground friendships and their social activities, many have learnt early in life that difference can be dangerous.

> This black boy went 'don't push me' – and he was going on like, you know how black boys go, 'don't dis me man', and she's going, 'don't talk black to me, even though you're black, you're English, talk English ...' So I thought, you've picked on the wrong person here, mate, she's going to give you as good as she takes. Anyway, in the end I've had to run down and literally drag her off him ...
>
> Local community worker, April '94

There is considerable pressure on black young people to assume the more readily accepted persona of the 'Bermondsey sort', and it is often through their choice of language that black young people find that they can gain acceptance in the community.

Detached Youth Worker Safety Guidelines

1. A worker on their own is more vulnerable. Always work in pairs, apart from in exceptional circumstances or when attending meetings with other agencies.
2. Produce projected timetables containing day, times, areas and clear meeting places to facilitate communication between workers. Work only within agreed working hours.
3. Where possible, meet at the project before sessions commence and report back when the session is over.
4. Inform line manager or other colleagues when undertaking home visits.
5. Always wear or carry an ID card containing your photograph, name and signature and the name of the organisation for formal identification purposes.
6. When making contact for the first time, always explain who you are and who you work for. If the contact does not want to talk to you, do not persist – try again another day.
7. Prioritise making new contacts – don't let regular contacts monopolise your time and avoid giving preferential treatment to particular young people.
8. Do not take unnecessary risks – your safety is paramount.
9. Use the allocated mobile phone when on duty to contact police, colleagues or other emergency services when a situation arises that cannot be dealt with (e.g. violence, serious threats, accidents, etc.).
10. In the interests of personal safety and to avoid attracting unnecessary attention or sending out the wrong signals, valuables should not be worn or carried when on duty.
11. Know and act within the law, particularly regarding conspiracy, incitement, technical or joint possession, loitering, obstructing the police or any other situation involving the client group.
12. Be aware that continuous planned work with groups or individual young people carrying out illegal acts (e.g. drug use, drug dealing, handling stolen goods etc.) may imply that a worker is aiding and abetting criminal actions and therefore breaking the law.
13. Be aware of professional boundaries. Where help is needed outside your expertise and responsibilities, refer contact to a specialist agency.
14. Be non-judgemental around issues of prostitution, drug use or sexual practice. Offer advice and support, but don't pressurise contacts to change their behaviour
15. Where contacts ask about particular services, give information about what is available and if appropriate, offer to go with them. Don't denigrate other agencies or the services they provide.
16. In cases of drug abuse, never accept used works (e.g. used syringes, pipes, needles etc.). Be aware of the risk posed by needle injury and the legal implications of substance residue.
17. Be aware of the projects, drop-ins and other services that are open for direct referral during detached youth work sessons.
18. Never disclose the identity of a client or give information that would help identify them without first obtaining their permission, preferably in writing.
19. Keep daily records to provide evidence of your activities with young people. This should not be done in their presence.

Fig. 17: Detached youth worker safety guidelines, adapted from *Southwark Youth Service Detached Youth Worker Guidelines* and *Westminster Detached Youth Work Policy*

> Now there's B.'s son – he talks like us, but he got in down there with a group of black kids and started talking rastafarian. Nobody could understand him. Then dad said, 'why don't you talk like us? You can talk like us, you're putting it on.' Now that they've sorted it all out, they get on great with him, but he had to show off, didn't he ...
>
> Local parent, April '94

Where friendships are concerned, similar rules prevail. Their white peers make it clear that they are expected to assimilate and may not even acknowledge the contradiction of having close black friends while continuing to hold racist views.

> I remember when I was at school, I went into a pub and one of the friends I was at school with was with a black bloke called Marsy – there was another black bloke, they called him Macky, because of macaroon: coon – and I remember him being in the pub and the person he was with was really racist. So I said to him 'why are you with him if you're racist,' and he said 'he's not black'. And I'm saying 'he IS black, look at him' – and he's going, 'no, he's not, he's not black'. And that was all I could get out of him, that this black person wasn't black. He just wouldn't acknowledge it, it was almost as if he was an honorary white person because he liked him. It was so strange.
>
> Local resident, April '94

In addition to the pressure to assimilate and 'act white', black young people are exposed to negative messages about themselves from every quarter. Their early life experiences are likely to be influenced by racist stereotypes which will inevitably form part of their self-image.

> My daughter found this pouch when she was playing on the slide and it had money and all these credit cards in it, if anyone else would have found that, he'd never have got it back. So my mother-in-law called little N. up and said, can you ask your dad to come up. Now, his daughter's picked his pouch up in the house and she's taken it outside and she's been playing with it, and she's gone home and completely forgotten about it on the slide. So my mother-in-law (who's white) went down to see him, and he went 'these fucking black bastards, keep nicking everything ...' and she went 'hang on, don't call my granddaughter a black bastard, she found it on the slide and brought it up to me – if anyone of them big kids had found it you'd never have got it back'.
>
> Local parent, April '94

Stereotypes about black criminality are the stuff of everyday conversation, and the general message to black young people is that they are personae non gratae. For example, despite the fact that mixed marriages and relationships between black boys and white girls are tolerated, white young women frequently claimed that a black boyfriend would be actively discouraged, not only by their parents but also by their peers.

> I was brought up round here and I still live in the area and all of my friends have very fixed roots in Bermondsey. None of them would have a mixed race

> relationship, none of them at all. And if I did, I'd be ostracised or I would be spoken to quite severely by them, by my friends, the people I went to school with, and asked what did I think I was doing. It would go round, it would be like a rumour or gossip. Often though, if a white male in this area goes with a black woman, that's not seen as so bad. I've got a friend who is with a black woman and has got a child and in a way she's totally accepted. Racist comments aren't said in front of her or if they are, they're quickly stamped on by anyone else.
>
> Local resident, June '94

In a context where social acceptance is precarious and based on such arbitrary and sometimes contradictory rules, choices have to be made about language and dress, food, musical preferences and relationships, requiring black young people to walk a daily cultural tightrope. In some cases, self-denial is the preferred option.

> I had an interesting conversation with a young Vietnamese guy. When I met him for the first time I said 'what's your name?' and he says 'M.' and I said 'that doesn't sound very Vietnamese, what's your real name?' So he says 'Wok, but people can't say it, it's too difficult'. And I said, 'look, my first name is Aine, it's a very very old Irish name, but it's my name, it's my birthright and even if people are having difficulty with it I insist they call me by it'. At the end of the conversation he said, 'all right then, call me Wok'.
>
> Team debriefing, April '94

It was this general scenario of potential self-denial and damaged self-confidence that informed the team's work with black young people. Apart from encouraging them to acknowledge and feel positive about their roots, there was also a need to address more complex issues, like those of language and identity. This was a particular issue for young people of mixed parentage.

> One of the young women used to call herself 'coloured' to begin with and it was quite interesting because when we were going off on summer camp they were all talking about either 'half-caste' or 'coloured' people, but by the time we were coming home they were all talking about 'mixed race'. Although she used those terms herself, you could tell she was uncomfortable with it and she'd go '... er, half-caste people' and we'd go 'mixed race – you'd probably find it a lot more comfortable if you used mixed race, it's a lot more accepted, half-caste means half of something'. And because she was mixed race herself, she identified with it and then she'd go and pull other people up for it. So she became the one who challenged it, she got the confidence and she'd go 'fuck off, I'm not half-caste, I'm not half of anything'.
>
> Team review, December '95

Footnote: The term 'dual heritage' is preferred nowadays, reflecting the fact that many young people's backgrounds are ethnically rather than racially mixed, and because notions of 'race' are being more widely questionnned.

Introducing black young people to non-racist language and a positive sense of self was part of a wider strategy, aimed at empowering them to be more assertive about their identity. Even though they were invariably in the minority, their participation in summer camps and other activities exposed them to the same challenges and responses that their white peers were hearing, and ensured that they were just as familiar with the counter-arguments.

Black Staff as Positive Role Models

The black staff who joined the detached team played an invaluable role, both as positive role models for the young people to relate to and as counters to the stereotypes many of them had in their heads. By simply being themselves, they were able to demonstrate how questionable these assumptions about the way black people think and behave were turning many of the white young people's views about black people on their head.

Over the three years, the ethnic profile of the detached team varied, but it included a high percentage of staff from ethnic minority backgrounds [fig. 18].

Short-term staff employed to assist with the summer holiday scheme in August 1995 included a black media worker who ran a successful video workshop, and there was also a popular black instructor who ran the scrambling courses. These encounters with skilled, professional black workers in a position of authority were highly influential, particularly for those whose perceptions of black people were based on hearsay rather than first-hand experience.

BDYWP: Ethnic Profile of Staff

Black (African) male	1	[October '94 to March '96]
Black (Asian) male	1	[September '94 to March '95]
Black (African) female	1	[September '95 to December '95]
African-Caribbean female	1	[August '95]
White (Anglo-Irish) male	1	[January '94 to March '96]
White (English) male	1	[August '95]
White (Irish) female	1	[March '93 to March '96]
White (English) female	1	[July '94 to March '95]

Fig. 18: BDYWP: ethnic profile of staff

> We went away with Bede for a summer camp, it was a joint thing and we went with a group of young women, and there was a lesbian worker, a black worker and three white heterosexual women workers (as far as I know). But the lesbian worker made it quite clear that she was a lesbian, and then there was M. who was the black worker. Now the young people were racist and homophobic and we let her take charge, so that she was the one they asked 'M., what shall we do? Shall we do this M.? I'm not sure how to do this, what do you think, M.?' It was a conscious strategy by myself and my co-worker because we wanted them to see that a black person could be in control and could be respected. Then little things started to come out. 'M.'s all right, isn't she? I like M'. And we'd say 'she's black though'. 'Yeah, I know, but it doesn't mean that all black people are horrible'. Just little changes in attitude.

Local youth worker, June '94

Similar changes were evident in the young people's relationship with Santi. Because he was respected and well-liked, there were frequent occasions when they would try to 'police' their own conversations to ensure that nothing racist was said in his presence. As with their black peers, the general attitude was one of acceptance as long as the differences could be ignored.

> ... I was talking to him and I said 'but how can you say that, I'm a black man'. And he said 'yeah, but you're a different black man'. And I said, 'I might sound like you but I'm a black man at the end of the day'. They don't see it though, they choose not to. It's a case of if you'll behave like us, that's okay, because you're not threatening us. Talk our language, assimilate, do things our way and that's fine, we won't see your colour. But if you start coming out with that Jah Rastafari shit and wearing your hair in dreadlocks, that's when you're a problem because then you're different, you're other, you become a threat.

Team debriefing, January '95

Such attitudes undoubtedly placed black workers under additional strain. They were members of the team first and foremost because of their particular skills or abilities, yet there was always the unspoken pressure to demonstrate through their practice that they were in some way representative of their community. By challenging their views, black workers' interactions with young people were often transforming. Through their relationships with individual youths, the workers were able to expose the irrationality of racism as powerfully as through any words or arguments.

> J. When we met Santi, he'd say 'but I'm black so why do you like me?' and we'd go 'because you're a nice geezer' and then he'd say 'well, there are a lot of others like me'. He's all right, Santi. He speaks to us and we like him. And we've met other black people, like Sade. She's all right too.
>
> A. Yes, but they're both on the team. Do you see Santi and Sade differently to other black people?
>
> J. Well, Santi's all right, he showed us that he cares about both black and white. Do you remember when I was on Speed and he came round and took me out and told me

> how bad it was and helped me change my views? I would probably still be on it if it wasn't for him.
>
> A. So how do you feel about black people now?
>
> J. They don't bother me as much as they used to.
>
> A. What was it that used to bother you in the first place?
>
> J. Well, I was thinking and believing they were taking our jobs and it's not true cause we know that now.
>
> Evaluation interview, January '96

The involvement of black workers in projects of this kind raises a number of important managerial considerations about support, training and supervision. Although the team's adherence to regular debriefings and evaluations ensured that there was always a forum for issues and concerns to be raised by individual workers, it was recognised that black workers might need access to alternative support – for example, by networking with other black youth workers in the borough on a regular basis.

This was particularly apparent during the course of the final evaluation, when a safety issue was identified that the black worker concerned had clearly felt unable or unwilling to raise at the time.

> The Advisory Committee had agreed to pay Sophie's cab fare because it was dark by the time we finished and she was a young woman travelling home on her own late at night. That was fine, I was 100 per cent in agreement with that decision. But when my car broke down...I was having to walk through the arches late at night, and although I'm over six foot tall I still felt that as a black man in Bermondsey, I was at risk too ...
>
> Worker's evaluation, March '96

As this experience shows, acknowledging the extra pressure placed on black workers to be positive and representative role models should also involve recognition of the many subtle ways racism can work to detract from their effectiveness. Where those responsible for managing black staff are able to acknowledge such contradictions and take them on board, the benefits of employing competent black staff can be immeasurable. However, this involves a long-term commitment to developing a relationship with them that is consultative, supportive and sensitive to the dangers of tokenism.

Working with Young Women

Work with young women during the first two years of the project developed directly out of the initial contacts that were made with the young men, many of whom were brothers or friends from neighbouring estates.

> It was through working with the young men that we got to meet the young women. The initial pieces of work we were doing involved fastening on to the young white

> men and whatever interests they had. Then through the football that we did with them in the summer we found that we were getting the young women coming along and supporting the game. So while the lads were playing football, we were moving in on the young women on the sidelines.
>
> Team review, December '94

The team used a similar approach to the one they had adopted with the young men, setting out to establish their interests and using the resulting outings and activities as a way of befriending them. Because of constraints on when they were allowed out, and the fact that the young women were more likely to disappear when they had homework or exams, they had a tendency to appear on the streets only intermittently. Consequently, the team's relationship with them took longer to establish. Whereas the young men had immediately declared their racist credentials to the team, the young women were less of a known quantity. From conversations with parents and others in the community, it was clear that some young women were not averse to swimming against the tide and challenging racism when they encountered it.

> We've never had bother on this estate, but a couple of years ago I was out on the balcony and all of a sudden I heard three of the girls going ten to the dozen, and I went flying downstairs, and two white boys had had a go at this black boy and well, the three of them, they had steamed in. Now these boys were 14 or 15 and they were first years of 11 or 12, and they just steamed in, didn't they ...
>
> Local resident, April '94

Predictably, as the workers got to know some of the young women in the area, it became clear that many of them subscribed to the same racist views and opinions as their brothers and male friends, although they were less inclined to act them out aggressively. This was evident from their use of terms like 'Paki', 'wog' and 'coon' and the attitudes they expressed towards mixed marriage and other racial issues.

Over the three years, the project was in contact with over fifty young women, ranging on average from 12 to 17 years. Some maintained intermittent contact with the team but resisted their offers to go out. Others took part in occasional trips to the bowling alley or the skating rink, but otherwise maintained their distance. Some of the young women related to the project through their boyfriends – for example, by seeking advice when one of the young men had been arrested on a drugs charge or attending the football or other events that had been organised with the boys in mind.

The group of young women who eventually formed the girls' group were aged between 13 and 14, and although they were already into drinking and hanging out with their mates or with boys from neighbouring estates, unlike many of their male peers, they were attending school on a regular basis. Perhaps because they had more opportunity to develop their powers of concentration in school, and were less into drug-taking, they seemed more willing to listen and ask questions and generally easier to talk to. The team's earliest reports indicate that, in discussions about racism and other issues, they found the girls more receptive and self-aware.

The workers' approach was to build on this rapport, using every opportunity that arose to develop the young women's confidence to make their own informed choices about racism, sexism, relationships, careers, drugs, alcohol, birth control and other concerns. Some of this work became centre-based, involving regular meetings at the Bede Centre on a Monday night, and did not depend on casual encounters to the same extent as the work with young men. Activities were often more coherently planned and the young women generally functioned better as a group. This made it easier for the workers to pursue their objectives, one of which was to encourage them to become more assertive, so that they could challenge the young men's racism and sexism in the same way as they would question or challenge other aspects of their behaviour.

> There are some racist comments going around within the group and they're not standing up to each other. For example, one of the young women has had a lot of graffiti written about her and the other girls call her a Paki, which she thinks is down to her colouring, because she's quite dark-skinned. It comes up quite a lot when I'm talking to them, even when this particular young woman isn't there. They feel quite uneasy about it, I think they feel it's a bit of a block. Their words to me were that the young men act differently around them when she's not there. But it's about getting them to feel they have the power to do something about that ...
>
> Team debriefing, November '94

The potential of the young women to influence their male peers was apparent from the outset. However, it was recognised that before this positive influence could be exerted, building their confidence to challenge the boys and to 'carve out' their own social space had to be a priority.

> They were talking about how dominant the young men can be in the group and how, when they make a remark about one of the young women, they don't challenge it because they know they're going to get more than they can handle. There does seem to be a lot of issues within that group of young women, and it would be good if we could get them to feel more self-esteem.
>
> Team debriefing, November '94

Through their relationships with brothers and older boys on their estates, they were beginning to exert a noticeable influence. This was apparent from the team's observations of their behaviour as a group, when they would physically distance themselves from the boys' racism.

> They didn't like it when the lads shouted 'nigger' at that young woman, they just didn't like it at all. And they were appalled by what P. shouted. The young women all

> sit separately when the young men are talking like that. All Monday night they were sitting separately on the wall and it was amazing talking to them, because they were saying 'this lot are just a joke', and were just laughing at them.
>
> Team debriefing, November '94

Many more of the young women had by now found themselves boyfriends, and the influence they exerted on them was beginning to show.

> Some of them have started to have relationships and they're becoming quite strong, the young women, and quite influential. I've noticed in particular one young woman – I don't think they've started going out yet – but one of them is very keen on one of the young men who could be one of the main perpetrators. And I'm actually beginning to see the influence on him already because I know what he's like, he just gets stuck in and the other night he was standing back and being very mellow and very low-key.
>
> Team debriefing, November '94

For them to declare their anti-racism publicly was not without risk, and the workers were very aware that they could find themselves excluded by their peers or labelled 'nigger-lovers'. The young women who opted to form the girls' group clearly gained strength from the numbers, which helped to empower some of them not only to confront racist behaviour but to appear undaunted by the prospect of the possible consequences of doing so publicly.

> Someone had written her initials next to the racist graffiti on the door and K., one of the young women, just went into them. Her exact words were 'you are a crowd of fucking racists, and I will have nothing to do with you, you are the low life. Don't you set me up by writing my initials up there, because if Aine didn't know me, she might think I'd done it.' There was just this whole sense of injustice she felt about it. The lads were a bit embarrassed about it. She was definitely having the last word.
>
> Team debriefing, November '94

For the young man who was on the receiving end of this altercation, a predictable reaction might have been to retaliate with aggression or, at the very least, to try to justify his actions. However, this was not the only occasion involving young women when members of the team witnessed a public climb-down by one of the boys. Even more remarkable, if compared with their behaviour a year or so before, no attempt was made by the other young men to come to their mate's defence.

> One thing I noticed on Monday is that when K. started to have a go at him, it got to the stage where he couldn't take any more because she was really pounding him with her mouth – 'you disgusting little bastard, you're just a racist you are' – and he was going 'look, I've had enough, all right, you've made your point' and she kept on and on and he was going 'look, you've made your point! All right, I was out of order!'

> It reminded me of that documentary about domestic violence when the bloke said 'look, I've had enough' and he knew he'd been defeated, it was like that. He really didn't like being put down in front of the whole group. He kept trying to have the last word, but she just wasn't having it.

Team debriefing, November '94

Despite this growing confidence to challenge racism, the young women had rarely had the opportunity to interact with groups of black young women and remained suspicious of black people they didn't know. Much of their leisure time was spent locally, and until the advent of the project, a good night out consisted of a bottle of wine or Martini and seeking out the company of older boys. Their involvement with the detached project helped to broaden their horizons by taking them out of Bermondsey and encouraging them to interact with young women from other areas. In February 1995, for example, an all-day event for young women in Hillingdon was instrumental in breaking down the barriers.

> As we were parking the minibus, a group of black young women were walking past, and immediately there were comments like 'look at her, who does she think she's looking at?' and remarks about how they were dressed. My response was 'look, girls, if there's going to be any more of that, we can turn around and go home right now'. Anyway, the whole day was organised around a series of workshops – music, drama, sports, safer sex and other health issues – and our lot chose the music workshop in the morning and they really got into it. Then in the afternoon that same group of black girls chose to do that workshop too. They were really assertive, into composing their own songs and so on, and thanks to the efforts of the two facilitators, they eventually got the two groups working together. By the end of the day they were up on the stage performing and making music together in front of over a hundred young women, it was brilliant. And by the time we were due to set off home, they were swapping addresses and talking about going to visit them up in Harlesden.

Team debriefing, February '95

In evaluating the project's work with young women, it is clear that it has had a formative influence on several of them. Of the original 15 members of the girls' group, two are now at college, and most of the others have found jobs. Among the younger age group, several are currently preparing to sit their GCSEs. Some of them have gone on record with their anti-racist views, including one young woman who wrote an essay about racism and the holocaust and has submitted it to a national writing competition [fig. 19]. They have also participated in workshops and conferences (see Exit Strategies, page 79, and Evaluating the Outcomes, page 82). While the credit belongs largely to the young women themselves, they have readily acknowledged their debt to the team.

The Holocaust
by Louise Aldridge

In 1939 there were eight million Jews living in Europe so where did they go? Between 1939 and 1945, six million Jewish men, women and children were murdered by the Nazis. Why all this death and destruction?

For hundreds of years, Christian Europe called the Jews 'Christ Killers' but if anyone betrayed Christ it was the people who did all this killing!

The people of Germany did not want Jews in Germany. They had banners outside their villages saying 'Jews are not welcome here'. They even had beer mats reading 'whoever buys from a Jew is a traitor to his people'.

That's not where it started though! It started centuries before this in the very heart of London. In 1275, Jews were made to wear a yellow badge and in 1287, two hundred and sixty-nine Jews were hanged in the Tower of London.

Years on, Jews, black people, Pakistanis and other races are still being taunted. Why? Because people of the white community for instance 'can't handle it'. They can't handle mixed races and things like that. If older folk see their children with these communities, they shun them. They can't handle the fact that times have changed and everyone wants to be friends with everyone else.

Some groups such as the NF cause more trouble by being against black people. Some black people hate white people because of the way they react to them, but this is just as bad because some white people have great friendships with other races. We all hate people for the wrong reasons. We hate them because of their colour or because of the way they speak. If we hate them for anything, it should be for something they have done to us physically. Everyone, even white people who think we have higher status, can upset each other.

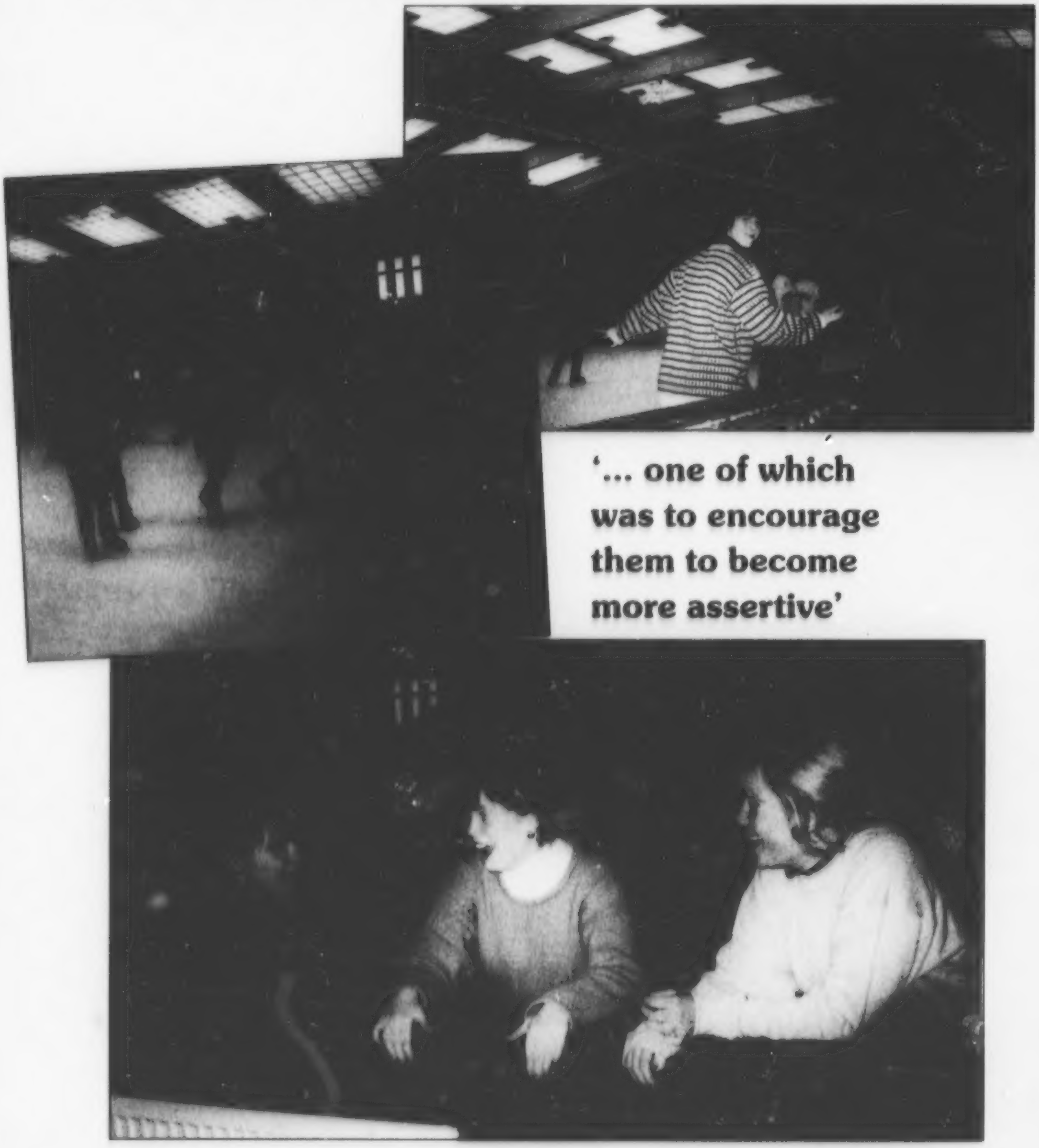
So why don't all these racists just grow up and take a look at their lives and others before putting people down?

My feelings on the matter are that I am disgusted at the whole nation for treating a group of people in such a nasty way. I think it's devastating knowing how totally racist people can become when they are living in fear of being taken over by people who are originally from another country. I hope nothing ever happens like the Holocaust again. The Jewish people were not Christ killers, we were. We killed Christ by our hatred for other communities.

Fig. 19: Extract from *The Holocaust*, an essay by Louise Aldridge

'The young women generally functioned better as a group, making it easier for the workers to pursue their objectives ... '

'... one of which was to encourage them to become more assertive'



Iceskating with the girls' group

Photos: BDYWP

Successes and Setbacks

The success of this work with young women was behind one of the project's most serious setbacks in November 1994, when a group of young men besieged the Bede Centre where the project's offices were based, overturning furniture, defacing the door with racist graffiti and terrifying the women workers who were inside. Their actions had a traumatic effect not only on the women who were in the centre at the time but also on members of the team, who felt responsible for what happened.

Monday nights had been traditionally set aside for women only, when several activities including the girls' group, an aerobics class and a crèche were organised for local women in cooperation with other BHA workers. Under normal circumstances, the young men were encouraged to stay away from the centre on Mondays when they usually played football with Ray in the park.

> This is the first Monday night when I've had to finish early, and the reason I did is because it was pissing down with rain all day long, there was no football, the pitch was waterlogged and I'd been here all day. So I went over to the park, because I'm always there between six and eight on a Monday night, but there was no-one there. I saw the group above the flats here chucking fireworks around. We were chatting for a bit and when I left them, it must have been about half past seven. They must have come over here as soon as I said I was going home and the rest of them must have come looking. They met up, it was raining, they thought 'where can we go?' and they've hit on Bede House. They were probably clocking who was going in and who was going out and realised none of us was around.

Team debriefing, November '94

What occurred subsequently was described in detail by one of the black women workers who had been in the building at the time.

> We got the first ring on the doorbell around half seven, and one of the women who does the crèche on Monday nights went to the door, looked through the peephole, saw a few boys and asked me what she should do and I said 'don't answer the door because Aine's not here, none of the other detached workers are here'. So she said okay and came away. The doorbell rang again about ten minutes later and it was them again – they were actually saying 'it's cold and we want to come in' – and one of the mums answered, one of the women who was taking part in the aerobics session, she went to the door and said to them through the door 'sorry, I'm not letting you in, I'm not opening it'. Then about 8 o'clock they started ringing again, and this time they kept their finger on the bell.
>
> So the cafe worker came out – we told her before she got to the door not to open it because none of the workers is here and we haven't got anyone here to

sort them out. Well, she opened the door to tell them and it looked as if the young women were trying to get in and they were being pushed from behind by the boys. Anyway they all streamed in, she obviously couldn't hold them off, and they came through the main hall, they basically stepped over us and went through into the cafe. One of my women actually got up and left because she was quite annoyed, it was woman's night and also there were so many of them. Anyway the class ended and the women who were left ordered coffee and it was all right for a bit and then about five or ten minutes after that they just started rumbling in the cafe. The chairs and the tables were everywhere and they were fighting near the hall entrance and just going mad, shouting. So we ran into the office and somehow Norma managed to get them out. One of the young women had a cut on her head, I don't know how she did it but it was bleeding quite profusely, really pouring, it looked quite bad. They went into the toilets and they were there for a while and when she came out she was laughing.

Once they'd left the building it was okay for about five minutes and then they just started kicking the door in and that's when we got really scared because they were kicking the door and shouting, so we locked ourselves in the office and one of the women phoned her partner from upstairs. He wasn't sure whether to phone the police or not but he thought he'd come and assess the situation first. Anyway, within that time I'd also spoken to Aine on the mobile and she said she'd try to get over as soon as she could. She came along when they were obviously still scuffling a bit, and then I. and F. came down. What worried me was seeing two black men come along which could have incited something worse.

We did think about calling the police, but because I support Aine's work and I felt that she'd covered loads of ground with these young men, I thought it would probably undo a lot of the work she'd done. Also I was worried about myself and the other women – what if they got arrested and remembered us and attacked us on another occasion? On the other hand, I don't know if I'd do the same next time because it was really frightening and it could have been worse than it actually was... All we heard was the locks lifting off the wood and the door basically coming away from the hinges. That's how bad it was.

I just thought they were going to come in and hurt us. It was only afterwards when we left the building that I saw the graffiti, and that's when it hit home that it was very racially motivated. If the graffiti had been of a different nature I would have thought it was just boys having a lark, but it was then I realised how serious it was and I felt really frightened. It was frightening them just trying to get in the building. I don't want to see the group night stop, I think it can work because this is the first incident we've ever had and they have been around on Monday nights before. But you've been around and that diffuses the situation. You're doing something with them so they don't have time to be bored or idle, there's something for them to do. I'd feel safe if the detached workers were around on a Monday night. The women feel quite strongly that they want this night to carry on and they don't want to suffer because of the stupid behaviour of a few.

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> Without dramatising it, I did feel like it was a scene out of the film *Mississippi Burning*. It felt very threatening. I could just envisage myself in that house when the Klu Klux Klan were burning it down and the kids were screaming and running. That's how we felt, like running into the office, locking the door and cowering in the corner. I think it's a shame that you can't be safe working in Bermondsey. I know it's a difficult area, I know about the history, but I felt very black. I normally don't notice my colour, but I felt very black, I felt I was a black woman working in Bermondsey. I was on the verge of leaving on Tuesday morning, now it's not so bad and I feel a little bit better. I'm not totally relaxed but I hope it doesn't happen again. Obviously I'm never going to have a chance to work with or speak to these young men, but I still feel very vulnerable.
>
> Team debriefing, November '94

When the team began to analyse what had taken place at their regular debriefing meeting, their immediate response was one of anger and disappointment. There were comments like 'sometimes you feel you're really making progress and then you get an incident like last Monday and you think maybe we've all been wasting our time'. However, as the discussion progressed, it was apparent that the event could well have developed into something far more serious had it not been for Aine's speedy intervention.

> ... He took a teaspoon and started to scrape away at the silver ink marker that they'd written all the stuff on the door with. And I said 'you've gone and put a big swastika there and you'll need to take that off, too, there's absolutely no intelligence whatsoever in that.' And he says 'why do you say that?' and I said 'because the swastika is what was used by the people who bombed you lot during the Second World War, you know, destroyed your grandparents' property.' We were standing outside and all the graffiti was on the door and I was talking about the swastika and what that represented and then I said, 'look lads, I'm not stupid, I know it was you who did it' and they went 'that's a liberty, you can't say it was us' and I said 'yes, I'm saying it was you and that I know it was you and as far as I'm concerned I want this stuff off the door now.' As they were scraping it, the paint underneath was coming off, so I went in and got some black paint and they actually took the paint from me and painted it over. They knew I was really pissed off. I was saying quite clearly 'I'm not going to talk to you about this now' because they were very high and I was furious with them ...
>
> Team debriefing, November '94

Planning a Response

In keeping with its practice of trying to draw positive lessons from its work with the young people, the team's discussion turned to ways of ensuring that such an event did not happen again. A full transcript of the discussion is reproduced here – an attempt to show how the team analysed the young people's behaviour that night, and how it worked together to develop responses to it.

Santi: I'd personally like to work tonight so that there's some work done immediately afterwards and it's not left and forgotten about. I don't think it will be forgotten about by us as workers, but by the young men and women.

Jackie: I feel they should be made aware of the effects it had on the women and myself, they should be made to realise because they'd never imagine how we felt in that building. I know you don't turn them away, but in some way they should be made aware that what they did was bang out of order, it was really bad and it could have had a worse effect on the workers and the women. We could lose our users and workers could leave their jobs over incidents like this. I'd like to see at least two of you here on Monday nights in future.

Aine: Part of me was wondering how they would handle it as a group if we had a meeting and invited you in to talk about how you felt and the position they put you in.

Jackie: I'm a bit worried about that. I'd probably be happy to come along, but not with a group as large as that. Maybe with one or two of the leaders.

Ray: They wouldn't all turn up anyway, but just to reassure you, they wouldn't do anything while we're here. Santi works with them all the time and he's never really been given any abuse or anything. I think this was one particular night when because of the weather, they're so used to seeing us, they probably expected to find a few of us here. But we will challenge it, we will go out. I'll go out with Sophie tonight.

Aine: As a team we need to decide exactly what we want to do with this group. I mean, how are we going to challenge it, when and where, and what are we trying to achieve?

Ray: I think we should let them know in no uncertain terms that we're angry about what happened – the majority of that group would respond if we said 'do you realise that by your very presence, by the way you stormed that building, the way you put the graffiti on the door, how that actually made people feel?' It should be pointed out to them that the people who were in here could very easily have picked up that phone and called the police, but they didn't, they showed that trust. They've accepted that this was a one-off, it won't happen again, we've assured them that it won't happen again, and we should get an agreement from the group that it won't – not just on Monday nights, but on any night.

Aine: I was thinking about the fact that they actually removed the graffiti for me. They knew that I was really angry and pissed off with them, and if they hadn't given a fig, they wouldn't have bothered, they'd have just said 'fuck off'.

Jackie: Do they understand, though? Do they understand what the swastika means and what the BNP stands for? They're obviously not an organised group, are they?

Ray: No, they're not organised. One thing an organised group of fascists wouldn't do is put the NF and the BNP together, it would be one or the other, because the two groups literally loathe each other. They know we're anti-racists and they probably thought 'let's have a laugh' and it carried on from there. Someone's come up with the idea, they've all gone 'yeah, yeah, yeah' and maybe some of them were against it, but they've just gone along with it, just let it happen. But I think after we've had a talk with them and we go out as a team, it will stop. I've got that much faith in them from the way they've responded to the talks we've had with them.

Jackie: The women's night's been going for seven weeks and this has never happened before. But when none of you were around, it happened.

Aine: Well, if there are any Monday nights when we know we're not able to be around in future, we'll let you know.

Jackie: We're going to look at security in our meeting tomorrow. We need a proper team on duty, someone to open the door and so on ...

Stella: You said there were one or two of the young men who didn't want to do it. What has to happen to get to the point where the ones who didn't want to do it actually have the confidence to challenge their peers?

Santi: They'd have to be strong because they could be moved out of the group, they could get the type of abuse that they're nigger-lovers now and stuff like that. So it's very delicate how you get them to challenge it.

Aine: I actually think a lot of change is happening within the young people. I know you didn't feel like that on Monday and yes, it is bad, it's horrific, it's very threatening and it's very racist – it's life-threatening stuff – but part of me is saying look, in comparison to where they were six months ago, no way could I have walked up like then and got them to take the graffiti off the door.

Ray: It's got to be taken into consideration as well that we're working with the perpetrators of racial attacks and yet no-one actually did get physically attacked. I'm just trying to look at the good points or make the best out of a bad situation, but it is worth remembering ...

Aine: I was really angry and pissed off and they knew I was feeling like that and they knew why we were making them take the graffiti off the door. I think it was their way of saying this is our territory, we want it, it's ours. They were also making the statement why aren't you around, it's raining so we're going to put stuff on the door that's going to piss you off, we're taking over the cafe, we're letting you know who's boss round here. It was a kind of macho thing, there's the sexism, the racism, all of that. I have a feeling that there are four of them who could be the main instigators.

Ray: Aine got me on the phone in Peckham and said get up here, and when I arrived in the cab I expected there to be a riot situation. When I got up the ramp I saw Aine there and I saw four of them scraping the door, so I said what's going on? And one of them said to me 'oh, we're removing some graffiti off the door for Aine'. I don't know what she'd said to them, but she'd got the four of them scraping it off straight away, by themselves. So I thought things ain't that bad if they've done that. They could just as easily have said 'look, fuck off, we're going' but they didn't. I think that shows how highly they rate the work she's doing.

Jackie: They were also approached by one of the women's partners who's black and he gave them a mouthful and they were really apologetic, like 'sorry, mate, we didn't realise it was your woman in there, we didn't mean it, it was a laugh'. The thing is they do know people round here.

Ray: If they were linked to organised fascists, they would have turned round and confronted them, they would have gone for them. That says to me that they wanted to do something but they didn't want to get caught doing it, they didn't really want a confrontational situation otherwise they would have done it. I mean they're quite big lads ...

Aine: That's why I think they've actually moved quite a bit. Somebody could have been very seriously hurt, but I think they realised how important the detached project is to them and they were a bit hesitant ...

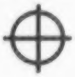
Ray: So far from this group we've had positive, positive, positive and we've never really had one let-down. This is the first time.

Santi: In terms of the graffiti though, I think that if you're actually making some progress with those kids and some of their fundamental views are really being challenged, perhaps they're hanging on to what feels safe. It's a definite statement, because they could have written anything on the door, but they put BNP and NF and swastikas. It's like giving you something and then taking it back. Last week when we were watching that video of them and they were saying all the right things, we were so over the moon. So were they just saying what they thought you wanted to hear? That's a possibility too.

Aine: The actual young people who were on the video are genuine. I know they were genuine. Those young people were saying 'the project means a lot to us, it's made my brain bigger, we really like the project' – they were the ones who came and apologised to me on Monday evening, and they were the ones who were saying 'look, we had nothing to do with that'.

Team debriefing, November '94

By responding immediately and making it clear that the events of that night were unacceptable, the team was able to defuse the situation. Later, the young men involved were offered another evening when they could come into the centre to play five-a-side football. A video club was also suggested with the idea of gradually introducing the group to films with a positive, anti-racist message. The young men were told that if any of this was to happen, they must produce their own groundrules for the use of the centre, taking account of other users and making it clear how they intended to deal with issues such as the consumption of alcohol or drugs. The young men's suggestions formed the basis of a contract that gave them limited access to the centre, and would hopefully pave the way for their continued use of this and other community facilities once the project ended.

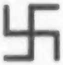


Origins in Celtic Cross, symbolises the White European Race
Sun wheel, emblem of British Movement (Fascists)

KBW
Keep Bermondsey White –
Slogan from Enoch Powell's days – "Keep Britain White"

BNP
British National Party

NF
National Front



Swastika – Nazi Symbol

CASTE
We know about your caste system in India

Fig. 20: Examples of racist graffiti

YEAR THREE: WELL, IT WORKED FOR US ...

Consolidation

By March 1995, at the start of the third and final year of funding, it seemed the project was genuinely beginning to consolidate its aims. It had taken this long to establish the kind of relationships that could have a significant influence on the lives and opinions of young people in the area; yet with the funding coming to an end, it was already time to start discussing exit strategies. Ever conscious of the need to involve the young people and others from the local community in deciding how to take the work forward, the team continued to develop links whenever new faces appeared on the streets, and to consolidate existing ones.

Camping weekends and other organised outings had become a regular activity, and although there were always newcomers to the project, most of the young people were by now used to the agreed boundaries around drinking, smoking 'puff' and what constituted acceptable behaviour when going out in the minibus. The practice of insisting that they play an active part in negotiating groundrules and sharing responsibility for organising their chosen activities was seeing results not only in the form of greater involvement, but also in terms of higher levels of tolerance and group cooperation.

Because of these advances, the team's primary task of tackling their racism could be approached more strategically. Although spontaneous conversations with individuals and small groups of young people continued to be the main forum for this work, many of the youths were by now all too familiar with the team's anti-racist arguments and responses, increasing the possibility that some of their comments were a way of seeking attention or simply made as a wind up.

> They continually look for our attention and they know that the one thing that will always stop us in our tracks is when they come out with something racist. In a way they really enjoy those discussions, but it is also a chance for them to get on the soap-box and play to the audience. If they've been drinking or smoking, they'll be very aggressive and loud, and they'll say things like 'I think they should kick all the coons out of Britain' or something really provocative that's designed to get a reaction. My response these days is to refuse to rise to the bait. I say to them 'look, lads, I'm bored with this conversation, it's not going anywhere. You're saying the same stuff you were coming out with eighteen months ago. If you want to sit down and have a serious conversation with us, then fine, we'll sit down and talk but if not, let's move on to something a bit more interesting ...'

Team debriefing, March '95

The challenge for the team in the final phase of the project, as they continued to build relationships with the young people they had come to know, was to develop new and more imaginative ways of tackling the work, taking account of the approaches that had proved most effective and building on their achievements.

Day Trips to France

Between December 1994 and August 1995, the offer of some subsidised tickets, courtesy of Stena Sealink, made it possible for the team to organise a series of day trips to France. This gave four groups of young people, most of whom had never been abroad before, a rare opportunity to experience being 'the other' for a day. This was the first time they had ever had to apply for a passport, go through customs and immigration controls, hear a language spoken around them that they did not understand, or handle foreign menus and currency – and it was hoped that this would make a lasting impression.

When planning these day trips, it was agreed that members of the team who accompanied the groups of six to eight young people would play a passive role, encouraging them to fend for themselves when it came to negotiating their way through passport controls, for example, or attempting to buy things in the shops. The intention was that this kind of experiential learning would encourage a more sympathetic insight into the experiences of migrants, refugees and other minorities. Although it wasn't always possible for the team to keep strictly to their non-interventionist role, the young people rarely returned from these trips without having learnt or experienced something of value.

> The first trip we organised was just before they stopped British Visitors' Passports, and all the kids had brought along their travel documents as instructed but there was one lad who thought he just had to sign a form, so he turned up without any papers at all. He was quite blasé about it at first, and he was saying 'oh, don't worry, I'll get through alright' – until he got to Passport Control where of course they refused to let him through. I had to convince the passport officer that I was his guardian and in loco parentis for the day, and in the end, after a lot of wrangling with different officials, we got him a Visitors' Passport and they let him go through. When we got back into the van, the lads were going on about how lucky he was. They had this notion that anyone could get into Britain, that they didn't need papers and that they just swan into the country with no hassles or controls. You could see they'd never really thought about it before – they'd obviously believed all that rubbish they'd been fed about people coming here and getting benefits and housing immediately. They had no idea that there was so much officialdom involved and that people can actually be refused entry if they don't have the appropriate documentation. So we were saying 'can you imagine what happens to people who don't have anyone to help them and don't even speak the language ...?'
>
> Team review, December '95

On one occasion, contact was made in advance with a local youth club and a football match was organised. Instead of playing against the French team, it was agreed that the teams would be mixed in a deliberate effort to subvert the 'frog-bashing' syndrome. It was an effective strategy, causing some of the young men not only to question their assumptions about the French but also to reassess their image of themselves.

> One of the young men I'd been working with over the past year who was continually breaking boundaries in order to win the favour of his peers, was running the risk of being excluded from the trip. We talked to him about it and he promised he'd be responsible and asked for a chance to prove himself so we let him come along. He'd broken his arm and it was in plaster that day, but he was the one that waded in and stopped the fight when one of our lads nearly got into a fracas with one of the French lads. It was amazing – he was going 'look, don't let them think we're English soccer hooligans, it's only a game of football'. Because of that all the others joined in and calmed the situation down.
>
> Team review, December '95

The Maidstone Prison Scheme

The fact that relationships with most of the young people were by now quite firmly established meant that workers were increasingly taken into their confidence. For many of them, hassles with the police resulting from petty crimes were a regular occurrence, and they often sought advice about their dealings with the police or upcoming court appearances. By making contact with a scheme organised by inmates of Maidstone Prison, the team was able to address issues of crime and criminalisation in a more strategic way, as well as letting them see the stark consequences of racist violence and other forms of anti-social behaviour [fig. 21].

In all, five groups were taken off to spend a day in the prison. The idea was to offer young people, particularly those who were potential or actual offenders, an experience of life on the inside. The programme included a tour of the cells, meetings with lifers and a chance to hear some first-hand accounts of the realities of life in prison.

> I got in touch with the prison and spoke to the guy who was organising the scheme, who was a lifer. I explained about the work we were doing, and about the importance of the anti-racism. We arranged to take the young men who we considered were the most vulnerable and also some of the young women who we thought might benefit from it. When we got there, we were searched and taken through to the isolation block where one of the prison officers showed them the cells and the shackles and other devices they use to control prisoners, like turning on the lights every five minutes to make sure they didn't attempt suicide. There was a lot of bravado at that point and they were still saying things like 'if I was in here, I'd be over the wall in no time'. But then we went into the Chaplaincy where they watched a presentation and some of the prisoners performed their own music, songs or

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Maidstone Prison Youth Project
Aims and Structure

The Chaplaincy and Probation Service, together with the activities group of the prison, has worked for the last three and a half years towards a proposal that came from prisoners to use music, videos and discussion as a means to try to deter young people from crime and/or drug abuse. All the prisoners are serving long sentences for serious crime and want to try to stop others from making their mistakes. We believe that we can make some youngsters think seriously about their lifestyle and consider their future because we have already done what they are just beginning and we have been where they are heading. We need cooperation with youth leaders, community workers, probation officers, the police – anyone who has contact with youngsters.

1. Events will consist of 30 minutes of music with a 30-minute break, followed by 30 minutes of music.
2. During the break, a police officer and possibly a prison officer will give a short 10-minute presentation.
3. Each song will be introduced by a prisoner telling his experience.
4. During the songs, graphic slides and videos will be shown, the idea being to make a complete audio-visual experience for the audience to remember and think about.
5. After the event we will break into groups of 8 to 10 led by two prisoners for discussion, questions etc. on any issue that the audience may have or we can provoke.
6. The prisoners are all being carefully selected and will be candid about their experience of prison, drugs, drink, crime and its results.
7. The event is NOT entertainment by any stretch of the imagination. The songs are truly hard-hitting and carried by professional quality music.
8. We are at the moment looking for suitable literature on all the relevant issues and where help can be found. We need help here.
9. The aim of the project is to hit hard, through the acceptable power of the arts. We will shock, we will provoke and we will make them think at least.
10. Our strongest asset is that we have been where they are now and can relate without patronising. In the groups they cannot hide because we know all the defences, all the scams, all the problems.
11. The minimum age limit attending is 14+.
12. It may be that after the event, individuals could be brought back to talk with us if that would help them. It is follow-up and liaison that will make the after-effect of the event a success or failure. There must be availability and the kids must know how and where to get it.
13. Among the participating prisoners there are men who have been junkies, there are alcoholics, there are lifers and armed robbers. Their message is aimed at the 'hardhearted' and it penetrates.

Fig. 21: Extract from Maidstone Prison Youth Scheme Guidelines

> poems they had written and talked about their lives and the crimes they'd committed and how they'd come to end up in prison. They were saying things like 'look, you may think you're a big-shot out there and you may even get away with it for a time, but eventually they catch you and when you're sitting alone in here in your cell at night, you cry like a baby and you miss your family, and you realise how much hurt and pain you've caused them and other people who love you'.

Team review, December '95

Although the team's main objective was to use these visits to confront the young people with the likely consequences of criminal behaviour, some of the visits also offered them an insight into the futility of racial hatred, particularly in the context of life imprisonment.

> Afterwards they were split up and each small group met with two prisoners. They'd arranged for our group to meet both a black and a white prisoner and this had a really positive effect, because the lads could see that the two of them were really good mates and depended on each other to survive in there. On another occasion, they met Winston Sillcott* and they were shocked to hear how he'd been stitched up. They could relate to what he was saying because they are continually getting stopped and searched by the police themselves. The whole experience has had a really powerful effect on them and they themselves have said it's been a true deterrent, seeing first hand how depressing and oppressive the regime is inside.

Team review, December '95

These encounters with black inmates were invaluable, particularly for the white young men who could easily identify with their experiences of criminalisation. For one young man, the encounter with a black inmate so radically changed his views towards black people that he was subsequently prepared to make a public stand against racism in front of his peers and to put himself at personal risk.

> R. was so racist when we first met him. He used to go on about 'I'll never talk to coons, I don't want nothing to do with them' and it was him who was always coming out with the racist jokes – 'which one of you would sleep with a black woman, then?' Stuff like that – really crude. Anyway, we got to know him when we took him out on trips and he liked me because I went up the dole office with him and helped him sort out his benefits. When we took him to Maidstone Prison, he met L. who was a lifer. Now L. had dreads, he was into his Jamaican roots and culture, the lot, and he'd done 18 years for murder, but these two struck up a kind of friendship. R. respected him because he'd been through a lot in prison but he'd never conformed and this really impressed him.
>
> Even though they weren't meant to correspond with any of the prisoners, he told me that L. wrote to him afterwards to say he hoped he was staying out of trouble, and

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Footnote: Winston Sillcott was convicted and subsequently acquitted for the murder of PC Keith Blakelock during the Broadwater Farm riots in 1985. He is currently appealing against his conviction for another murder for which he is serving a life sentence.

> he wrote back about how that visit to the prison had changed his views on crime and made him see alot of things differently. Anyway, just before Christmas, there was a party and there were lots of local young people there, including a black guy from Southwark College and this kid K., who we'd helped to get rehoused when he was homeless. Now, K. used to knock around with the NF and sell *The Flag* and he was a really nasty piece of work. Apparently he was giving this black guy dirty looks all evening, and at some point he came over and took out a knife from his pocket and started twisting it around in front of him and intimidating him. So R. goes to K. 'here, what do you think you're fucking doing?' and K. went 'it's them fucking blacks, I hate 'em' and R. goes 'don't you say that to me, you're a scummy, disgusting little racist, you are, and if I see you take that knife out again I'm gonna smash your fucking face in'.
>
> Team review, March '96

The objective evidence that the project was making headway spoke for itself. Even the police, who had been keeping records of the number of call-outs they got to particular estates, claimed that the vandalism and racist attacks by young people down the Blue had reduced drastically. Moreover, some of the young men who had once been active perpetrators of attacks on black people were conceding that their views and behaviour had changed since becoming involved with the project.

A. Why did you get involved with the project?

J. There was nothing happening on the estates. We were just hanging around, smoking, doing drugs, throwing stones or eggs at black people's cars ...

A. Was that a racist thing or a just for a joke?

R. We didn't really think about it, we just did it for the buzz, the chase. It gives you a high. Quite often they'd stop the car and chase us. Basically it was just a laugh.

A. Were the drivers white or black?

R. It was always black.

A. Why was it always black?

R. Just was.

A. And were they men or women?

R. Men.

A. How did it happen? Did you organise it yourselves?

R. We'd meet up and someone would get the eggs, that was it really.

J. It would be for the chase, to get the police to come after us, anything really, it didn't matter. It was the buzz.

A. So whose idea was it? Who decided that black people would be the targets?

R. When we were hanging around, there were two lots – the older ones and the younger ones. The older lot used to do it and then the younger lot would do it 'cause the older ones did.

A. So what other things were you doing?

R. Drugs and just getting into trouble with the police, really.

J. I got a caution from the police about the drugs and my mum went mad.

A. What was the reason you stopped?

R. When we realised that it was stupid and we started hanging around with different people. We wanted to change our lifestyles ... We were walking down the road one night and I stopped for a pee behind a bus stop and I got stopped and searched by the police just because of my bald head. They just pick on us because of the way we look. One other time we were stopped and searched at Surrey Quays and accused of shoplifting, and we weren't even near the place – just because of the way we were dressed and the short hair. They had us with our hands in the air and spreadeagled and that. It makes us really angry ...

A. If you think about it, isn't that the way black people get treated all the time?

R. Yeah, if you've got dreadlocks, people think you're a drug dealer or a mugger, but it's just the way people dress. If you want to have short hair and wear Doc Martens it doesn't mean you're a racist. But it gets put down like that to everyone, and living in Bermondsey makes it worse cause they all think you're racist.

A. How does that make you feel?

R. Don't know really. They're accusing me for no reason. I mean, I didn't ask to be put here, nor did my mum and I don't really like it, but basically what can I do?

A. Do you think you're different from your friends?

R. Yeah.

A. In what way?

R. We're cleverer than them. They think it's okay to hang around the streets getting into trouble, but they're just stupid ...

Evaluation interview, March '96

Despite such apparent success stories, there was never room for complacency. Racist attitudes still surfaced all the time, particularly among the young men, and it would have been naive to assume that 10 to 15 hours a week of detached youth work could do much more than scratch the surface of the problem. It was increasingly clear to all involved that if the project's short-term successes were to have any lasting effect, there needed to be a permant detached youth work presence on the local streets and estates.

One incident in particular helped highlight the urgent need for the detached work to continue. This was a vicious racist attack on a group of Somali young men at the Southwark funfair in March '95. As well as providing the team with yet another timely and sobering reminder of the enormity of the task they had taken on, the attack helped to reaffirm the severity of the consequences if they were to suddenly disappear when the funding ran out.

Working with Somali Young Men

Ever since the start of the project, the question of how best to work with black young people in the absence of any significant black presence on the streets had been raised at Advisory Committee meetings and team discussions. Although isolated black youngsters had been participating in the outings and generally

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benefiting from the team's efforts to boost their self-esteem, the question of how to target friendship groups or support those 'invisible' black young people who were most at risk of racial attack remained unresolved.

> We were getting more and more uncomfortable with the moral aspects of it, really. We're working with the perpetrators of racist violence, which we're supposed to do because it's there in our aims, and the victims can't come out of their door after six o'clock at night in Bermondsey. How do we address this problem? And what sort of messages is this giving to people in the community? We'd been talking about this for weeks, how we were going to approach it and what we should do ...
>
> Team review, December '95

As a result of such discussions, the team had made the decision some months before the fairground incident to make contact with a local Somali woman who was known in the area as a prominent member of her community. Her two sons along with a group of their friends had for some time been the subject of a court injunction brought by Southwark Council against a group of white youths, and it was hoped that she would be able to suggest ways of working with them and other Somali youths that would reduce their isolation yet not expose them to further risk.

Despite the injunction and their daily experience of harassment, the Somali young men and their friends had persisted in their efforts to get involved with white young people in the area. Fed up with always having to rely on each others' company, they had used their own initiative to try to make contact with other young people their own age.

> At first they'd made friends with these youths, they were going to play football together. Then there was an attack on one of them and the injunction was brought out. But they'd been lulled into a false sense of security and tried to be friendly again. That's what makes it worse, these kids actually wanted to make friends in the area, they didn't want to be isolated, they wanted to get out, to play football – their main love was football and they wanted us to go out and arrange matches with other people in the area. Even after the attack they were asking me to arrange football matches. So that was something we had to get our heads around. How could we explain that we didn't want to set them up?
>
> Team review, December '95

The team was still trying to resolve this dilemma when an attack took place at the annual fair in Southwark Park [fig. 22], involving a group of well over thirty white youths who either participated, watched or egged the attackers on.

> The way the Somali young men explained it was that when they went to the fair they thought they'd be protected, they thought the police were going to be there and they weren't expecting anything. But this was their outgoing nature, they were going 'we're sick of each other – I see him every day, him every day, him every day, we want to meet new people'. So they went down to the annual fairground, like all

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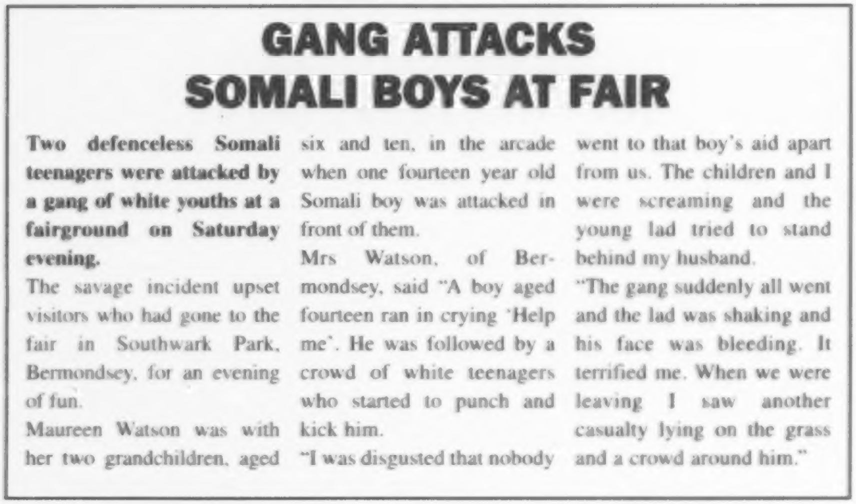


GANG ATTACKS SOMALI BOYS AT FAIR

Two defenceless Somali teenagers were attacked by a gang of white youths at a fairground on Saturday evening.

The savage incident upset visitors who had gone to the fair in Southwark Park, Bermondsey, for an evening of fun.

Maureen Watson was with her two grandchildren, aged six and ten, in the arcade when one fourteen year old Somali boy was attacked in front of them.

Mrs Watson, of Bermondsey, said "A boy aged fourteen ran in crying 'Help me'. He was followed by a crowd of white teenagers who started to punch and kick him.

"I was disgusted that nobody went to that boy's aid apart from us. The children and I were screaming and the young lad tried to stand behind my husband.

"The gang suddenly all went and the lad was shaking and his face was bleeding. It terrified me. When we were leaving I saw another casualty lying on the grass and a crowd around him."

Fig. 22: Gang Attacks Somali Boys at Fair, *Southwark News*, 16.3.95

> young people do and it was 'alright lads, how're you doing?' and wham! One got a knife round his face and there was plenty of boot straight into the head, with quite a few of them doing the kicking. What really hurt them even more than the attack itself was the attitude of other people – no-one tried to stop it, people just walked past ...
>
> Team review, December '95

Although it was quickly established that none of the youths who took part in the attack were involved with the project, the team was aware that some of the young people had witnessed the attack and apparently done nothing to intervene. In its immediate aftermath, there was clearly a need to speak to those who had been present about how they felt, to find out how it had happened and challenge any signs of complacency or collusion. Several of the young women had been visibly distressed at having witnessed such unprovoked and gratuitous violence. A successful prosecution of the perpetrators required witnesses who would be prepared to risk the possibility of threats and intimidation, and if any of them decided to give evidence, they would also need ongoing support.

As they set about these tasks, the team was equally concerned to find a way of supporting the Somali young men whose trust had been so badly betrayed. An immediate and meaningful intervention was needed that would be both therapeutic and re-empowering. After visiting and gaining the agreement of their mothers, it was decided to take them away on a week's camp which offered canoeing, absailing and other outdoor activities; and to use this time to rebuild their confidence, talk about the incident and explore further ways of supporting them.

> We took the Somali young men away on a camp at Easter '95 and it was one of the best residentials we've ever had. At first going up there it was a bit quiet and they

> were talking to each other in their own language, but as the time wore on they got more and more friendly and outgoing. They were very polite, and that was something I'd personally never witnessed before – with other groups of young people, you have to work really hard at it to win that kind of respect. It was only after a couple of days with us that they relaxed and started talking to us about the attack. I was dead keen to talk to them about it, but also not to push them. So I was sitting in the back of the van with them, the other workers were at the front, and they started talking about how the attack had happened and how they felt about it ... It seemed they were more confident talking to me. There was possibly a sexist aspect to it, but sometimes boys relate easier to a male.
>
> Team review, December '95

Apart from the benefits of talking about their feelings and having 'safe space' in which to enjoy themselves free from the threat of violence or harassment, this was the first holiday any of the young Somalis had ever had and the first time many of them had been out of London. There were also benefits for the workers, who gained a lot from the experience of accompanying them and found some of their own previous assumptions about 'victims' challenged. Of the eight young men who came along, several spoke a number of languages and each had firm aspirations to complete their schooling and go on to higher education. From their conversations and their performance of the activities, it was clear that despite the horror of the attack and the inevitable physical and emotional scars they had been left with, the assault had not dented their confidence in their own abilities or their determination to make something positive out of their lives.

Nevertheless, there was considerable frustration within the team at the limited nature of such work with black young people. With the project ending in less than a year, the possibilities of building on the positive relationships that had developed during this week at camp were limited. Another day's outing was arranged as a follow-up to the camp, when the Somali young men opted to go mountain-biking. Later, when told about the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, several expressed a keen interest in getting involved.

While the possibility of this kind of work with black young people remained an option for the duration of the project, the practical limitations stemming from the decision to prioritise work with the perpetrators were self-evident. This decision was a necessary response at a time when to have done nothing to try to stem the escalation of racial violence and harassment would have been indefensible. However, the needs of these black young men – and others like them – will remain an equally pressing concern for as long as they remain ostracised by their white peers and isolated from mainstream youth provision. Their experience suggests that there is a need for Southwark and other youth service providers to adopt a balanced approach to anti-racist youth work – one that encompasses both the reeducation of the perpetrators and the empowerment of their victims.

Exit Strategies

In the aftermath of the attack, some vital work had been carried out with both black and white young people in the area, and the question of how to ensure that others would be in a position to build on it once the NYA funding ran out was becoming a growing concern in Advisory Committee meetings. There was a fear that these and other earlier achievements would be short-lived unless an exit strategy could be found that involved both local residents and the young people themselves in taking the work forward. The project's credibility had been hard-earned, and there was a determination not to simply abandon the young people once the money dried up.

As members of the team began to broach these issues with the young people, it was clear that they too were anxious about the project coming to an end. Some of the young men were angry at the prospect of once again having nothing to do and nowhere to go. Other young people, particularly those in the girls' group, had begun to talk about lobbying the council or organising a petition. Parents and local residents were also expressing concerns, and several indicated that they were willing to throw their support behind any campaign that might be needed to maintain a youth work presence in the area.

It was the knowledge of this support within the local community which led to the Advisory Committee's decision to organise a public meeting in June to discuss the various options and identify a core of supporters who would be willing to assist in lobbying for funds and support [fig. 23]. The meeting attracted over eighty people, including some of the Somali young men. In all, over twenty young people attended, some of whom spoke passionately about what the loss of the detached project meant for them and other youths in the Bermondsey area.

> This project means a lot to us round here. It's a chance for us to feel welcome. When the funding stops we'll have nothing and there isn't enough in this area as it is ... At first we weren't sure we could trust these people, but now we've built up a relationship with them and we've learnt about each other. Aine is very fair, but she doesn't take any nonsense and she gives us information ... If you take this away from us, we could lose all trust in people again.
>
> Extract from the speech given by two young women at the public meeting, 5 June '95

This kind of active support from the young people was only possible because they had begun to develop the confidence to articulate their own needs and opinions in public. Their views were echoed by many others who attended the meeting, including the local beat officer who spoke eloquently about the positive impact the project had had on the incidence of youth crime in the area.

> I became a home beat officer a few months before the project was set up. I had a meeting with Aine quite early in the running of things. At that time, we police

BEDE DETACHED YOUTH WORK PROJECT

WHAT HAS THE PROJECT ACHIEVED SO FAR?

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE MONEY RUNS OUT?

WHO WILL HELP IN THE CAMPAIGN TO SECURE MORE FUNDING?

... WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

IF YOU'D LIKE SOME ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS,

WHY NOT COME ALONG TO

A PUBLIC MEETING

MONDAY 5TH JUNE
FROM 6.30-9.30 PM
BEDE CENTRE, ABBEYFIELD ROAD

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

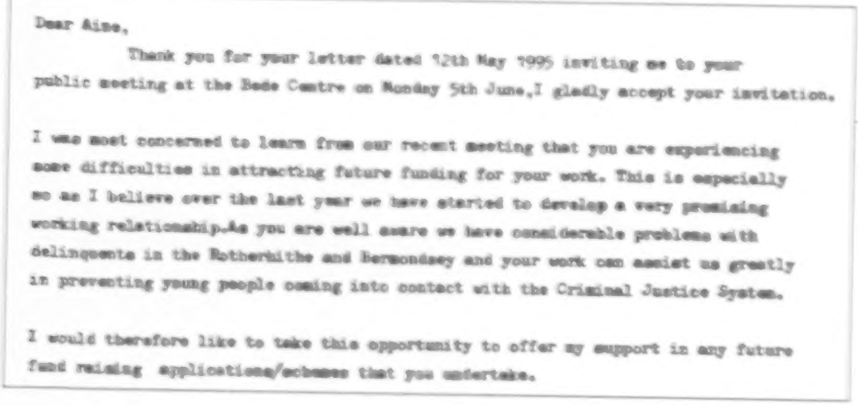
AINE WOODS – TEL: 0171-237-9162 OR

LEAH LEVANE – TEL: 0171-237-3881

Fig. 23: BDYWP publicity flyer for the public meeting on 5 June '95

> officers were constantly being called out to deal with a group of youths who were causing problems. The main area was the wall just outside here. We would get two or three calls a night. I can say quite categorically that this has died away completely ... We've maybe had three or four calls this year, all of which have amounted to nothing whatsoever ... A group of youths gathering can be quite threatening, especially to vulnerable members of society, so they look to us to try and sort it out. But the only thing we can do is move them off, and we know as well as they do that there's nowhere for them to go. Which is why projects like this are vitally important, because it gives the young people somewhere to go – particularly taking account of the fact that the local council's youth provision has been cut back drastically and is literally non-existent. It makes projects like this one that much more important. If we, as police officers, go up to young people and say 'look, you can't stay here, you're annoying people and causing problems' they will obviously say 'well, where is there for us to go?' And if we can say 'you can go here ...' it makes our job so much easier and puts us in a better light with the young people we're dealing with ... So I personally hope the project is successful and continues for many years to come.
>
> Extract from speech made by home beat officer at the public meeting, 5 June '95

After listening to these interventions and watching a short video of the project's work, the audience comprising parents, residents, the local MP, community police officers, representatives of local youth and voluntary agencies and young people, split into smaller groups to weigh up the pros and cons of a number of options, as well as coming up with their own suggestions. Several ideas were generated, but by far the most popular was the proposal that a disused shopfront be located that could operate as an advice and drop-in centre for young people as well as serving as a base for ongoing detached work.



Dear Aine,

Thank you for your letter dated 12th May 1995 inviting me to your public meeting at the Bede Centre on Monday 5th June,I gladly accept your invitation.

I was most concerned to learn from our recent meeting that you are experiencing some difficulties in attracting future funding for your work. This is especially so as I believe over the last year we have started to develop a very promising working relationship.As you are well aware we have considerable problems with delinquents in the Rotherhithe and Bermondsey and your work can assist us greatly in preventing young people coming into contact with the Criminal Justice System.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity to offer my support in any future fund raising applications/schemes that you undertake.

Fig. 24: Police Commissioner's reply to the invitation to the public meeting at Bede Centre

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By the end of the meeting, it was very apparent that local people wanted the project replaced by something permanent and that they were prepared to write to the media, lobby local councillors or if necessary organise fundraising to achieve this. Their readiness to give up their time and energy in this way was a moving testimony to their respect for the project's achievements and their concern for the welfare of the young people of Bermondsey.

Evaluating the Outcomes

Evaluating anti-racist detached youth work is, by definition, problematic. Whether the project has achieved its stated outcomes must necessarily be judged, in the first instance, on the basis of the evidence required by the funders who made it possible. This includes quantitative data such as on the numbers, age, gender and ethnic origin of the young people encountered, as well as success criteria that were identified almost four years ago in the original funding application. Attitudinal change is a long-term process, however, and as the above account has hopefully shown, these 'success indicators' can only tell part of an unfinished story.

The feasibility study conducted by Bede House Association in 1992 prior to the start of the project showed a blanket reluctance among the existing youth and voluntary services to work with the young people who were the project's primary target group. Widely regarded as too threatening and dangerous to work with, they had effectively been written off as lost causes. The intention to bring about changes in their behaviour and views about race, as articulated in the project's aims and outcomes, was therefore regarded as idealism in some sections of the community, and underscored by genuine doubts as to whether any meaningful progress was going to be possible.

Three years on, with the project at an end, that belief in the young people's capacity to change seems to have been vindicated. Much of what the project set out to do has been achieved, albeit in the short-term and on a limited scale. Where it has fallen short of its objectives, it was invariably a lack of time or human resources rather than a lack of vision or commitment that hindered their achievement.

Has there been a measurable attitude or behaviour shift in young people involved with the project?

The project came into casual or sustained contact with nearly two hundred young people over the three years of its existence. During this time, many of them clearly benefited from the opportunity to relate to caring adults who showed them respect, consistency, new paths and alternative ways of looking at their world. It is very likely that this positive influence will result in a permanent change in attitudes and behaviour for some, although clearly this could only be confirmed by ongoing monitoring or by interviewing a cross-section of the young people at a future date.

> To put a percentage on it would be guesswork and I think that would be wrong. There's absolutely no question that some of those young people have changed – in fact we've had an influence on all of them, one way or another. It's probably true to say that we've influenced more of them than we've changed, but there's no way of telling for certain. If you talk to adults, they'll say things like 'oh, I remember this teacher and she had such-and-such an influence on me'. But you don't know that at the time, you only know it with the wisdom of hindsight. If we were to come back in five years time and interview some of them, maybe we'd be able to get a more accurate picture. Young people change all the time, so who's to say what's going to become of them? Having said that, even if we've managed to change 15 per cent of the young people – and I'd call that a conservative estimate – that's a pretty good result given what we're up against in this area. People shouldn't forget where Bermondsey is, and that the whole culture is racist. It'll take more than a youth project to change things ...
>
> Team review, December '95

The extent to which changes in attitudes or behaviour shifts are measurable is limited. Many of the young people moved on during the life of the project, and are no longer around to be asked. Some left the area, a few found jobs or went to college, and there were others who simply outgrew the project or the lure of the streets. Among those who remained and grew with the project, different interests, friendship groups, school commitments, exams or family holidays could lead to lengthy periods when there was little or no contact. The team relied largely on hearsay or casual encounters to keep track of those who had passed through, and it is unlikely that conventional evaluation methods such as questionnaires or street surveys would provide a reliable picture.

Even where young people sustained their contact with the project over the three years, there appears to be no way of determining how much the experience changed them with any accuracy. Like the perceived benefits of psychotherapy or any other processes designed to bring about personal change, there is always the possibility that some of the young people might have developed anti-racist views of their own accord, or that their racist views and behaviour may resurface when the team's positive intervention comes to an end.

> Individually, on a one-to-one basis, we can definitely say that the racist attitudes have changed. Most of the time, it was just common sense. But when you're talking to someone and saying 'well, look at it from this angle ...' sometimes they'll agree because maybe they'd feel stupid not to. Plus it's in their interests now not to offend us. But when they get in a pack, it's a different story. There's a pack mentality involved, and once we're out of earshot, who knows what goes on. For this kind of work to be meaningful there has to be a constant, sustained presence. It's like learning a language – if you don't keep practising it, you're going to lose it. When we're not around to challenge and they don't know that there's a presence there, they could just slip back into it.
>
> Team review, December '95

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Despite such reservations, the team's written and verbal observations of how certain young people developed during the lifetime of the project combines with anecdotal evidence from the young people themselves to suggest that the project has had a significant influence, even on some young men who were proud three years ago to describe themselves as racists.

> A. When did you first meet up with Ray and myself?
> R. It must have been about a year and a half ago.
> A. And what did you think of us?
> R. We liked both of you. You're on the level.
> J. You talk to us like people – the way we want to be spoken to. You give us respect and that's basically what we want. Most people call us thugs and things like that, but you don't, you respect us.
> A. How do you feel about the way we work?
> R. It's the respect. You talk to us with respect, especially about the racism.
> A. Do you think we've made a difference?
> R. Yeah, you talk to us about all sorts of things and you listen. And you're honest with us. We thought you were really up-front, like 'I ain't taking no shit' and we like that. And you can have a good laugh, too.
> J. At least you're straight with us
> A. What was your attitude towards racism before we met?
> R. We believed everthing we were fed – that the blacks had the jobs and the houses and that they did all the muggings. Now we just take it as being stupid, believing all that crap.
> A. But who was telling you these things?
> R. Dunno. Someone would say something and everyone would follow. People say that Bermondsey is a racist area and it ain't really, but they think it is and then they play on it 'cause people feel afraid of them and it makes them feel big ...
>
> Evaluation interview, January '96

Although there is no guarantee that these changed attitudes will prevail, when this kind of evidence is combined with police figures, it suggests that many of the young people no longer regard arbitrary racial violence and harassment as a source of street entertainment as a direct result of their contact with the project.

Will some of the work continue after the withdrawal of the full-time worker?

The final year of the project saw rising levels of anxiety within the team about the fate of their work. Aware that they had no choice but to let go, they were concerned that there should be some continuity of provision and that the young people should not feel 'dumped'.

Fortunately, efforts to secure funding for a continuation of the work have met with partial success, and it is now confirmed that some detached youth work will continue in the Bermondsey area on an indefinite basis from April 1996. Funded by Southwark Council, it will take the form of a voluntary/statutory partnership of independent local providers. Bede's share of the allocated grant should make it possible to employ one full-time detached worker with additional part-time hours to cover an extended catchment area. It will not, however, be sufficient to pay for costly activities such as scrambling or residentials, and efforts by the Advisory Committee to secure additional funding for transport, outings and administrative costs are continuing. Despite benefiting from the relatively generous funding levels established by the NYA, the project had to survive on a tight and carefully balanced budget, and any reduction in hours or resources, particularly when spread over a larger area, is likely to be immediately felt.

However these concerns are resolved, there can be no doubt that the young people's interventions contributed to the Council's decision to make funding for detached work a priority. As a follow-up to the public meeting in June '95, a group of young men requested an audience with Simon Hughes, the local MP, and put up a convincing case for their needs to be taken seriously, resulting in his agreement to intervene on their behalf. The young people's active participation in the public meeting and the sheer strength of community support in evidence that night made a strong impression on all who were present, as did the police confirmation of decreasing levels of crime, vandalism and racial attacks locally.

As a result of the careful links that have been built up in the area over the past three years, a community network of local people has now been identified that not only recognises the project's achievements, but has demonstrated a readiness to support any future detached youth work initiatives in the area. The challenge of ensuring that this network of support is maintained and strengthened now rests with BHA and those who are appointed to continue the work.

The temporary nature of the project has inevitably confined its impact to those who came into direct contact with it. Any future provision will need to take account of the many other young people in and around Bermondsey, particularly those in the younger age-group, who either 'slipped through the net' or were too young to work with when the project started.

> Those young people we met two and a half years ago, we developed a really good relationship with and moved miles with them. But then, because there was such a demand on our time, they actually got left when we had to move on to others. What happened to those young people? Or to the kids who are hanging out on the estates now who were 10 and 11 years of age when we came on the streets? I saw a big crowd of them outside the other night, and I had to stop myself because I really wanted to go over and interact with them. The young people on the Rennie Estate were younger when we started and it was easier for us to work with them because we got them at a young age. Can you imagine if we'd had a project with the same young people running right through? Can you imagine the attitudes that could have been changed if we'd been able to work with them consistently over a period of, say, five or six years?

Team review, December '95

Has the project become recognised by the youth service and other service providers as a major voice in local youth issues?

Since the start of the project, there has been a sustained effort to liaise with other youth work providers in the area. The Neighbourhood Youth Office was represented for a time on the Advisory Committee, and one of its workers played an important role in Aine's induction by taking her around the area, pointing out young people's regular haunts and introducing her to some of the parents and residents. There has also been regular contact with the head of the youth service and ongoing liaison with individual youth workers over the three years.

As the project's reputation spread beyond Southwark, there has been a growing interest in its rationale and methodology from further afield. Enquiries about anti-racist youth work, originally directed at the NYA or the CRE have on several occasions been re-routed to members of the detached team or the Advisory Committee. Their approaches have included requests for speakers and workshop leaders, as well as enquiries about visiting Bermondsey and meeting to discuss approaches and responses to racism. This is partly a reflection of the limited number of focused anti-racist youth projects in the country to learn from. However, it also reflects the fact that researchers and youth work providers in other areas of the country have identifed BDYWP as an important and innovative project with relevant things to say.

Contact has also been made by journalists representing national newspapers, television and radio seeking interviews with the workers and young people. However, more often than not their approaches were made in the context of a short-lived media interest, sparked by events involving skinheads or gangs of youths outside the Bermondsey area. On one occasion, there was a request to film the young men staging a 'spontaneous' riot; on another, racist graffiti was daubed on a wall by the crew in preparation for filming an interview with young people; and on a third occasion, the reporter made it clear that the film crew was only interested in talking to girl gangs involved in shoplifting or racist attacks. As well as glorifying the very behaviour the project had set out to challenge, this kind of negative sensationalism would have enhanced the stereotype of Bermondsey as a racist area and done nothing for the young people involved. Consequently, a decision was taken to avoid any involvement with the media unless the project retained some form of editorial control.

Despite the fact that the project has been recognised nationally, the original aim of developing a pivotal role in the local context by setting up a local youth workers' forum, where issues affecting young people in the area could be more strategically addressed, was never realised. The majority of youth workers operating in Southwark are part-timers with their hours and work already cut out, and there were difficulties establishing a mutually convenient time when people could meet. However, it is hoped that the network created by the new funding arrangements will help to resolve this problem by facilitating much closer liaison among youth and voluntary providers across the borough and ensuring that the lessons from the project fully inform future detached work in the borough.

Is there heightened community awareness and involvement in youth work initiatives?

In March 1996, a group of young people from the project will accompany members of the detached team to the House of Commons to meet with MPs and talk about what they and others have gained from their involvement in the project. The level of confidence and commitment needed to participate in such an event reflects the fact that, from the outset, one of the project's agendas has been to empower those young people who showed an interest or potential in youth or community initiatives. This aim was pursued by encouraging their participation in conferences, workshops and meetings, and by showing them ways of channelling their anger about local injustices into legitimate activities such as lobbying, campaigning or organising petitions.

The work with young women was particularly successful in this respect. In March 1995, one of the group was persuaded to contribute to a highly successful workshop looking at girl gangs and positive alternatives to the media stereotype. Drawing on her personal experience, she talked about her own friendship group and explained that it was possible for girl gangs to organise their social and leisure activities around principles other than violence, shoplifting or other anti-social behaviour. Subsequently, another young woman wrote an essay about racism and the Holocaust, and was encouraged to submit it to a national writing competition [fig. 19, page 60].

Several members of the girls' group also attended an all-day young women's workshop organised by the Hillingdon Youth Service in celebration of 1995 International Women's Day. Apart from the benefits of interacting with youth workers and young women from a variety of cultural and social backgrounds, they took part in a music workshop and performed their piece together with a group of black young women from Harlesden to an audience of over one hundred women and girls. This experience was a great boost to their confidence, and paved the way for their contribution at the project's public meeting 'Where Do We Go From Here?' in June '95, when they spoke eloquently about their relationship with the detached team and what the loss of the project would mean for young people in the Bermondsey area.

The young men, who rarely met in discreet groups other than to play football, seemed to find it more difficult to channel their energies in this way. Their regular use of beer, 'puff' or cocaine when socialising together was a constant issue, and detracted from their ability to get their act together as efficiently as the young women. Nevertheless, when encouraged, they negotiated their own groundrules for using the Bede Association community centre. They also insisted on meeting with Simon Hughes, the local MP, as a follow-up to the project's public meeting, and in their own way made a very strong case for the continuation of detached work in the area.

There were also a few individual young men who developed an interest in youth or community activities as a result of their experience of the project, even though this interest was not always sustained or followed through. One, in particular, was encouraged to accompany the detached team to the Youth Against Racism conference organised by the West Derby youth work team in February 1996.

> V. was one of the young men who was heavily into Speed and Santi and Ray worked with him and got him off it. After that he started asking questions about politics and power and why the government is not addressing issues like unemployment and housing that affect young people. He's made it clear that he wants to give back to other young people what he's got from the project, which is knowledge, a voice, self-awareness and self-esteem. So we took him along to the Youth Against Racism conference and he spoke about his drug abuse, his involvement in race attacks and how the project has changed his life. When we were leaving the conference, all the young people there came up and thanked him for being so brave and so honest. They were saying that listening to him had given them hope, because if he could change, so could others. And there were black workers and white workers coming up to him and saying how impressed they were that he'd had the courage to stand up and say what he did. On the train home, that lad was ten feet tall, he was pleased with the response he'd got because he'd been so nervous beforehand. We were talking to him about how much more you benefit from being on the side of those who oppose racism, and you could see that the experience he'd had at the conference had shown him some of these benefits. Since then he's told us that he definitely wants to do youth work, and we've been talking to him about voluntary work and courses he could do later on if he's really serious about it.
>
> Team review, March '96

Although this young man's experience was not typical, it is a powerful statement about the results that can be achieved when youth workers value, respect and actively support the young people they work with.

Is there evidence of collaboration between young black and white people as a direct result of the project's work?

At the start of the project, it had been hoped that groups of black and white youths could eventually be brought together for discussions or joint activities. However, the fear that black young people would feel set up discouraged the workers from initiating any such staged encounters. They were aware that there may never be a right time as long as the kind of virulent racism that was behind the attack on the Somali young men and other incidents of racial violence was in evidence, but to have put black young people at risk of racial abuse for the sake of social experiment would have been highly irresponsible.

The team's strategy was therefore to exploit any opportunity to expose the white young people to experiences and interactions that would challenge their stereotypes and assumptions about people from black and other minority communities. At first, this was confined to routing the minibus through nearby areas like Streatham, Peckham and Brixton, and using their comments and reactions as a basis for discussion. Subsequently, trips were deliberately organised in areas with high ethnic minority populations, so that ice-skating or bowling activities would necessarily involve interacting with black young people. This strategy was complemented by the use of black workers and instructors whenever the opportunity arose, and an ongoing dialogue about the futility of seeing their black peers as the enemy. It has resulted in a gradual change in their behaviour.

> J. Some black people still have attitudes. We were walking though Southwark Park the other day and this black kid shouted 'NF scum' at us just cause we had skinheads.
> A. So how did that make you feel?
> J. Didn't bother me, cause I know we ain't and it was just to make him look big. Stupid really, judging a book by its cover. We just kept walking.
> A. Did it make you think that's what it's like for black kids all the time?
> R. Not really, that didn't occur to me. Anyway I didn't want to belittle myself, he was only small.
> A. What would you have done a year ago – especially if he was your age and your size?
> J. Smashed his face in.

Evaluation interview, January '96

Despite subscribing to racist views, many of the white young people claimed to have black friends, particularly at school where they mixed with peers from backgrounds and cultures other than their own. However, territorialism combined with peer pressure, particularly among young men within the older group (over-18s), had prevented individuals from recognising such contradictions. The team's efforts eventually created a climate on trips and outings where individual black young people could relax because the white young people no longer felt the need to exhibit their racism. Taking them out of their own environment apparently allowed them the freedom to enjoy the company of their black peers without the pressure of having to be racist.

> Last October, we took them over to Lee Valley Skating Rink in Edmonton, and there were kids there of every nationality really enjoying themselves. Our group relaxed, there were no jibes, no comments, they just got on with it and joined in their games. It was amazing – such a contrast to how they would have behaved three years ago, when they'd be shouting racist abuse out of the window or making comments about black people from the back of the van. On odd occasions when there was a group of them together, they'd even try to psyche out black kids by staring them down or completely blanking them out. I think they no longer feel pressured to hate blacks like they did three years ago – it was like a legacy they had to carry around. A lot of the young people feel more comfortable now when they're around black people, and this is reflected in the fact that you now see more black young people, particularly in the younger age groups, out on the streets in the evenings these days or hanging out on the estates. The fear hasn't gone completely, but the general atmosphere which used to feel so threatening has definitely changed.

Team review, March '96

Efforts to work with isolated black young people and raise their self-esteem may also have contributed to this changing atmosphere. However, a lot more targeted work is needed if groups of black and white young people are to be actively encouraged to collaborate together on friendly, equal terms.

CONCLUSION

We have endeavoured to give an accurate and honest account of the Bede Detached Youth Work Project and to balance the sense of achievement of all involved against our sense of realism about the limitations of a three-year project in such a confined catchment area.

The project had both strengths and weaknesses, but its legacy will hopefully be a group of young adults who no longer feel the need to subscribe to the racism of their parents' generation or their own peers. Their exposure to black, female and anti-racist white workers has given them some powerful role models to emulate. They have also had opportunities to take part in activities they'd never have had access to, and exposure to ideas they might never have heard or been prepared to listen to. The fact that the workers persevered and were not intimidated by the threat of hostility or violence was ultimately recognised for what it was – a confirmation of their own self-worth.

The individual gains may be short-lived or take years to fully materialise, but it is already possible to see some of the immediate effects. Many of the young people who became involved with the project are more confident and assertive. Even those who resisted the workers' anti-racist messages and clung to their old beliefs are at least aware that there are alternative ways of thinking and behaving if they should decide to exercise this choice in the future. For those individuals who did have the courage to change, there is the possibility of using their skills and channelling their energies into constructive involvement in the community, rather than destrutive activities that could destroy their own or others' lives. They will hopefully serve as role models to other young people they encounter.

These achievements were possible because the detached workers were able to make a clear distinction between the young people they were working with and their negative attitudes. They were also possible because the team and those who supported them were willing to analyse and learn from their successes and setbacks. The approaches we have described are specific to the Bermondsey context, and may not work for everyone, but we hope that the lessons from our project will help youth workers everywhere in their efforts to meet the challenges of the complex and rapidly changing world which young people, both black and white, have inherited.

> – What do you think about the project ending?
> – It's a shame. You spent time with us and took us out of here and already you've changed two people. If you'd had more time you could have changed some of our friends. See, you spend time with us and you join in. You don't say 'well, get on with it' like some people do.
> – Do you think that's a good way to build relationships?
> – Well, it worked for us ...
>
> Evaluation interview, January '96

Summary of Anti-Racist Detached Youth Work Strategies

- **Building up a committed team of workers** who have a sound knowledge of racism and the local community.
- **Valuing and respecting the young people** and being able to distinguish between the young person and their behaviour.
- **Keeping nightly records of encounters with young people on the streets** and ensuring that sessions are planned and properly debriefed.
- **Regular team reviews** with structured inputs to help identify and develop effective anti-racist strategies.
- **Continuous evaluation of successes and setbacks** so that lessons can be learnt promptly and immediate responses developed.
- **Preparing monthly reports of all activities and achievements** as a means of monitoring progress and maintaining an ongoing dialogue with management and funders.
- **Establishing regular contacts with parents and other interested parties** to involve them and keep them informed of the project's work.
- **Isolating and working with ringleaders** with influence over their peer groups.
- **Establishing clear boundaries** by negotiating and agreeing groundrules (for example, on racist behaviour and drug use) and responding consistently when these are not adhered to.
- **Encouraging young people to question popular views** on race, gender, sexuality and other controversial issues by providing them with accurate information and exposing them to alternative views.
- **Exposing white young people to positive black role models** who can challenge popular stereotypes.
- **Providing activities that reflect the young people's interests** and allow for positive one-to-one and small group interactions.
- **Building relationships** by supporting and befriending individuals and making them feel okay about themselves.
- **Demonstrating honesty and consistency** in all dealings with young people to develop trust.

DISCUSSION AND TRAINING NOTES

It is hoped that the following structured tasks and discussions will assist workers, trainees and managers involved in detached youth work or community development initiatives who are keen to develop anti-racist approaches. They are designed to be used in a variety of formal or informal contexts – for example:

- to facilitate the exchange of views during training workshops or team meetings;
- to encourage the consideration of good or appropriate practice;
- to promote understanding of some of the key issues and approaches;
- to support the development of individual work plans and team action planning exercises; and
- to develop short or long-term strategies for effective outreach work with young people on the streets and others in the wider community.

Building the Team

The job specification extract on page 94 lists some of the essential skills that part-time detached youth workers joining Bede Detached Youth Work Project were required to demonstrate.

- ◆ What evidence or past experiences would you consider acceptable if you were involved in selecting candidates for a similar detached youth work post?
- ◆ If you are a trainee, what skills, experiences and/or personal qualities do you have that would demonstrate your competence to do detached youth work?
- ◆ If you are managing or doing detached work already, how might you develop or adapt this list to reflect your own project's requirements?
- ◆ What safeguards could be built in to ensure that newly-appointed workers are adequately supported and monitored?

Recording and Monitoring

The pro forma on page 95 was used by BDYWP to record and monitor activities on a nightly basis.

Discuss how you might adapt or improve this record sheet (or design a better one) to suit your own project's identified needs.

Can you devise a working method of collating and monitoring the data provided? For example ...

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

1. The ability to make, sustain and use contact with young people in a professional, positive and caring manner.
2. The ability to befriend, support, challenge and inspire young people so as to enhance their personal and social development.
3. The ability to work alongside other members of a staff team, with other workers and with local people towards the achievement of collectively agreed aims and objectives.
4. The ability to communicate effectively orally and in writing, and the ability to prepare written material in support of the work.
5. The ability to manage one's own work and the work of others; to produce regular work plans; and to manage and be accountable for resources.
6. The ability and willingness to work unsocial hours, and to motivate oneself in what can sometimes be isolated and difficult working conditions.
7. To be of sufficient good health, to be able to do 'street work' and other outdoor work.
8. To be able and willing to organise and take part in residential work and to support such work when not directly involved.

- How could you present the data so that it is accessible to those who receive it?
- Who would you wish to share this information with – and why?
- How often would you wish to review it?
- How could you ensure that the information only goes to those you intend to receive it?

Developing Team Groundrules

The groundrules on page 96 were developed by the BDYWP team as a way of encouraging consistency in their behaviour when working with young people on the streets.

- What would each of these groundrules mean in practice?
- Are there any other groundrules or team values you'd like to see included?
- Can you think of situations when it would be difficult to keep to any of them?

DATE:	**TIME:**	**VENUE:**
MALE: FEMALE: TOTAL:	WHITE BLACK ASIAN MIXED RACE IRISH	AGE:
SCHOOL	EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYED
COMMENTS/PERCEPTIONS/GRAFFITI ON RACE, IMMIGRATION etc.		
COMMENTS (DRUGS/ALCOHOL, ATMOSPHERE, EMPLOYMENT)		
OBSERVATIONS/CONVERSATIONS		
ACTION TO BE TAKEN		
WORKERS:		

BDYWP: Team Values

- consistent behaviour
- respect for individuals
- not belittling individuals in front of their peers
- avoiding sarcasm and ridicule
- avoiding angry exchanges or physical confrontation
- meeting promises and commitments
- punctuality
- negotiated rules or contracts when taking groups out
- strict adherence to any rules or contracts made

- ◆ What kind of staff training would be needed in order to encourage and develop these values?

Safety Guidelines

- ◆ How would you amend or improve the safety guidelines on page 97 to ensure workers' safety?
- ◆ Can you envisage situations when it might be difficult to keep to them?
- ◆ What steps could be taken to minimise the risks?

Making A Contract

The need to set clear boundaries gave rise to this personal contract (page 98) which young people involved in the BDYWP were required to sign.

- ◆ Can you suggest ways of amending or improving it?
- ◆ What difficulties can you foresee when trying to convince young people of the need for such a contract?
- ◆ How would you explain what is meant by 'racist and sexist behaviour'?
- ◆ What sanctions, if any, would be appropriate for a young person who overstepped these boundaries – for example, by getting drunk or making deliberately racist comments?

Challenging Racist Comments

The following quotes refer to situations when racist comments were expressed by young people or their parents in front of individual team members.

- ◆ How would you have responded in each of the three situations?
- ◆ What other racist comments have you heard from young people or

Detached Youth Worker Safety Guidelines

1. A worker on their own is more vulnerable. Always work in pairs, apart from in exceptional circumstances or when attending meetings with other agencies.
2. Produce projected timetables containing day, times, areas and clear meeting places to facilitate communication between workers. Work only within agreed working hours.
3. Where possible, meet at the project before sessions commence and report back when the session is over.
4. Inform line manager or other colleagues when undertaking home visits.
5. Always wear or carry an ID card containing your photograph, name and signature and the name of the organisation for formal identification purposes.
6. When making contact for the first time, always explain who you are and who you work for. If the contact does not want to talk to you, do not persist – try again another day.
7. Prioritise making new contacts – don't let regular contacts monopolise your time and avoid giving preferential treatment to particular young people.
8. Do not take unnecessary risks – your safety is paramount.
9. Use the allocated mobile phone when on duty to contact police, colleagues or other emergency services when a situation arises that cannot be dealt with (eg. violence, serious threats, accidents etc.).
10. In the interests of personal safety and to avoid attracting unnecessary attention or sending out the wrong signals, valuables should not be worn or carried when on duty.
11. Know and act within the law, particularly regarding conspiracy, incitement, technical or joint possession, loitering, obstructing the police or any other situation involving the client group.
12. Be aware that continuous planned work with groups or individual young people carrying out illegal acts (eg. drug use, drug dealing, handling stolen goods etc.) may imply that a worker is aiding and abetting criminal actions and therefore breaking the law.
13. Be aware of professional boundaries. Where help is needed outside your expertise and responsibilities, refer contact to a specialist agency.
14. Be non-judgemental around issues of prostitution, drug use or sexual practice. Offer advice and support, but don't pressurise contacts to change their behaviour
15. Where contacts ask about particular services, give information about what is available and if appropriate, offer to go with them. Don't denigrate other agencies or the services they provide.
16. In cases of drug abuse, never accept used works (e.g. used syringes, pipes, needles etc.). Be aware of the risk posed by needle injury and the legal implications of substance residue.
17. Be aware of the projects, drop-ins and other services that are open for direct referral during detached youth work sessons.
18. Never disclose the identity of a client or give information that would help identify them without first obtaining their permission, preferably in writing.
19. Keep daily records to provide evidence of your activities with young people. This should not be done in their presence.

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Bede Detached Youth Work Project Contract

The Bede Detached Project works towards providing a safe environment for all young people in the area we work in.

In order to ensure this, we expect that each young person accepts and agrees to our boundaries.

1. I agree not to be racist or sexist – i.e. no abusive language, actions or any forms of intimidating behaviour
2. I agree to respect other people's culture and traditions
3. I agree not to be involved in any form of drug misuse – this includes alcohol
4. I agree to respect the property of Bede Detached Project and Bede House Association. I also agree to respect public property when in the company of the Bede Detached Project

We ask that all young people who choose to make use of the services of the Bede Detached Project show respect and a responsible attitude.

In the event of police involvement, parents or guardians will be notified immediately.

Aine Woods
Senior Worker

Signed: Young Person ....

Signed: Parent/Guardian ....

Address ....
....
....

Tel .... BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE their parents? (How did you respond? Was your response effective?)

- Where do these ideas and assumptions come from and how are they perpetuated?
- How would you go about challenging the attitudes expressed rather than the person? Are there situations you can think of when this would prove difficult?

1. They honestly believe from their parents and from other people in the community that to get a house or a flat from Southwark Council you have to either be black or Asian. And as proof, they quote the equal opportunities statements they've seen in the paper where the jobs are advertised. They'll go 'look, it says it here ...' So that's the kind of thing they're coming out with – jobs and houses. They feel that because they are white, if they come out with a statement that's racist, they'll get done for it yet a black person could come out with a similar statement and not get done for it. So they have this false sense of injustice – 'it's not fucking fair'.

2. I was talking to one of the mothers about the project and what we're trying to do and she was going 'Oh, I do understand what you're saying, now don't get me wrong, I'm not racist, but ...' Of course, you usually know what's coming then, but even I was shocked with what she came out with next. She went on about people coming into the country and how they should really have to work before they get free NHS treatment and she goes 'now, don't get me wrong, I'm not racist, I wouldn't stop them coming into the country, but in my opinion Asian and African women should be forcibly sterilised before they come in, so they don't have any more kids that'll be a burden on the state'. She went on and on like this, and this was with her two sons of 13 and 14 standing there listening to what she was saying.

3. We were getting into the minibus and one of them saw Santi and he goes 'I ain't getting in the van with that coon' and he walked off.

Team debriefing, March '95

Responding to Provocation

The following extract is taken from a team debriefing, when one of the workers was describing her response to young people's deliberately provocative comments. Because of the context in which they were made, she chose not to challenge them in a direct way.

- How else might you respond to provocative comments such as the one described?
- What other kinds of deliberately provocative statements have you heard young people make? How did (or would) you respond?
- Is there any way of distinguishing between 'conscious' and 'unconscious' racism?

- If you knew a comment was not intended to offend, would this have any bearing on your response?
- Do you agree that there are times when racist comments should be ignored rather than challenged? What other circumstances would warrant this, in your opinion?

> They continually look for our attention and they know that the one thing that will always stop us in our tracks is when they come out with something racist. In a way they really enjoy those discussions, but it is also a chance for them to get on the soap-box and play to the audience. If they've been drinking or smoking, they'll be very aggressive and loud, and they'll say things like 'I think they should kick all the coons out of Britain' or something really provocative that's designed to get a reaction. My response these days is to refuse to rise to the bait. I say to them 'look, lads, I'm bored with this conversation, it's not going anywhere. You're saying the same stuff you were coming out with eighteen months ago. If you want to sit down and have a serious conversation with us, then fine, we'll sit down and talk but if not, let's move on to something a bit more interesting ...'
>
> Team debriefing, March '95

Identity Issues

Helping to develop young people's sense of their own identity was seen as an important aspect of BDYWP's work. These quotes describe how issues of identity were addressed by the workers in an informal way.

> 1. I had an interesting conversation with a young Vietnamese guy. When I met him for the first time I said 'what's your name?' and he says 'M.' and I said 'that doesn't sound very Vietnamese, what's your real name?' So he says 'Wok, but people can't say it, it's too difficult'. And I said, 'look, my first name is Aine, it's a very very old Irish name, but it's my name, it's my birthright and even if people are having difficulty with it I insist they call me by it.' At the end of the conversation he said, 'all right then, call me Wok'.
>
> 2. One of the young women used to call herself 'coloured' to begin with and it was quite interesting because when we were going off on summer camp they were all talking about either 'half-caste' or 'coloured' people, but by the time we were coming home they were all talking about 'mixed race'. Although she used those terms herself, you could tell she was uncomfortable with it and she'd go '...er, half-caste people' and we'd go 'mixed race – you'd probably find it a lot more comfortable if you used mixed race, it's a lot more accepted, half-caste means half of something'. And because she was mixed race herself, she identified with it and then she'd go and pull other people up for it. So she became the one who challenged it, she got the confidence and she'd go 'fuck off, I'm not half-caste, I'm not half of anything'.

3. A lot of their names aren't English – they're Irish or Polish or Vietnamese. And when I'm trying to explore all this with them I say 'well, let's take a look at your own history, let's take a look at your Irish history and the history of the Irish in Bermondsey down the docks in the 1800s and what they went through up to the '50s when we had the posters on the doors "no Irish, no blacks, no dogs".' And I talk to them about the natural alliances between the Black community, the Asian community and the Irish community. A lot of that is about shared values – the extended family unit, the respect we have for each other, how we talk to older people in our communities, the struggles we've had, the whole thing with British Imperialism.

◆ Do you think these responses were appropriate? Discuss what else you could have said in each of the three situations described.

Detached Youth Project Procedures for Dealing with Drugs

1. Detached workers do not supply cigarette papers, tobacco, cannabis or any hard or soft drugs
2. Detached workers do not receive any cigarette papers, tobacco, cannabis or any hard or soft drugs
3. Detached workers do not support or encourage use of drugs
4. Detached workers have a responsibility to inform a young person about the drug they are taking:
    - what is in the drug;
    - what are the side effects;
    - where is the nearest water supply;
    - where can a young person go if they need to 'chill out';
    - where is the nearest local drug project.
5. Detached workers have an obligation to inform and advise if a young person is under 14-years-old – a parent could sue for negligence if any harm comes to their child while in your presence
6. If a young person is using drugs while on the premises, the worker can be charged for aiding or abetting or could be seen to be encouraging drug use
7. If a worker finds drugs, they can be charged with possession
   Best thing to do: have an agreement to hand drugs over to someone in authority or the police or flush them down the toilet ...

- Do you agree that a person's name and their identity are closely linked? How does your name reflect your own racial or cultural identity or your sense of self?
- What is your understanding of the sentence 'I talk to them about the natural alliances between the Black community, the Asian community and the Irish community ... the struggles we've had, the whole thing with British Imperialism'?

Dealing with Drug Use and Abuse

These procedures were devised to guide the BDYWP team on how to deal with young people who were taking or in possession of drugs.

- How might you amend or improve them?
- What difficulties might you encounter when trying to keep to these guidelines?
- How would you go about offering appropriate support to a young person who was constantly 'out of it' on speed or another illegal drug?

Responding to Racist Incidents

The following transcript is an extract from a team debriefing that took place after an incident had occurred in the building where the team's office was based. A group of young men had besieged the premises, overturning chairs and tables in the cafe and terrifying the women who were working or taking part in activities inside. Later, racist graffiti was daubed on the door.

- Which of the suggestions and decisions that were made during the discussion do you agree or disagree with? Can you expand on your reasons?
- What else could have been done as a follow-up to the incident described?

> **Santi**: I'd personally like to work tonight so that there's some work done immediately afterwards and it's not left and forgotten about. I don't think it will be forgotten about by us as workers, but by the young men and women.
>
> **Jackie**: I feel they should be made aware of the effects it had on the women and myself, they should be made to realise because they'd never imagine how we felt in that building. I know you don't turn them away, but in some way they should be made aware that what they did was bang out of order, it was really bad and it could have had a worse effect on the workers and the women. We could lose our users and workers could leave their jobs over incidents like this. I'd like to see at least two of you here on Monday nights in future.
>
> **Aine**: Part of me was wondering how they would handle it as a group if we had a meeting and invited you in to talk about how you felt and the position they put you in.

Jackie: I'm a bit worried about that. I'd probably be happy to come along, but not with a group as large as that. Maybe with one or two of the leaders.

Ray: They wouldn't all turn up anyway, but just to reassure you, they wouldn't do anything while we're here. Santi works with them all the time and he's never really been given any abuse or anything. I think this was one particular night when because of the weather, they're so used to seeing us, they probably expected to find a few of us here. But we will challenge it, we will go out. I'll go out with Sophie tonight.

Aine: As a team we need to decide exactly what we want to do with this group. mean, how are we going to challenge it, when and where, and what are we trying to achieve?

Ray: I think we should let them know in no uncertain terms that we're angry about what happened – the majority of that group would respond if we said 'do you realise that by your very presence, by the way you stormed that building, the way you put the graffiti on the door, how that actually made people feel?' It should be pointed out to them that the people who were in here could very easily have picked up that phone and called the police, but they didn't, they showed that trust. They've accepted that this was a one-off, it won't happen again, we've assured them that it won't happen again, and we should get an agreement from the group that it won't – not just on Monday nights, but on any night.

Aine: I was thinking about the fact that they actually removed the graffiti for me. They knew that I was really angry and pissed off with them, and if they hadn't given a fig, they wouldn't have bothered, they'd have just said 'fuck off'.

Jackie: Do they understand, though? Do they understand what the swastika means and what the BNP stands for? They're obviously not an organised group, are they?

Ray: No, they're not organised. One thing an organised group of fascists wouldn't do is put the NF and the BNP together, it would be one or the other, because the two groups literally loathe each other. They know we're anti-racists and they probably thought 'let's have a laugh' and it carried on from there. Someone's come up with the idea, they've all gone 'yeah, yeah, yeah' and maybe some of them were against it, but they've just gone along with it, just let it happen. But I think after we've had a talk with them and we go out as a team, it will stop. I've got that much faith in them from the way they've responded to the talks we've had with them.

Jackie: The women's night's been going for seven weeks and this has never happened before. But when none of you were around, it happened.

Aine: Well, if there are any Monday nights when we know we're not able to be around in future, we'll let you know.

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Jackie: We're going to look at security in our meeting tomorrow. We need a proper team on duty, someone to open the door and so on...

Stella: You said there were one or two of the young men who didn't want to do it. What has to happen to get to the point where the ones who didn't want to do it actually have the confidence to challenge their peers?

Santi: They'd have to be strong because they could be moved out of the group, they could get the type of abuse that they're nigger-lovers now and stuff like that. So it's very delicate how you get them to challenge it.

Aine: I actually think a lot of change is happening within the young people. I know you didn't feel like that on Monday and yes, it is bad, it's horrific, it's very threatening and it's very racist – it's life-threatening stuff – but part of me is saying look, in comparison with where they were six months ago, no way could I have walked up like then and got them to take the graffiti off the door.

Ray: It's got to be taken into consideration as well that we're working with the perpetrators of racial attacks and yet no-one actually did get physically attacked. I'm just trying to look at the good points or make the best out of a bad situation, but it is worth remembering ...

Aine: I was really angry and pissed off and they knew I was feeling like that and they knew why we were making them take the graffiti off the door. I think it was their way of saying this is our territory, we want it, it's ours. They were also making the statement why aren't you around, it's raining so we're going to put stuff on the door that's going to piss you off, we're taking over the café, we're letting you know who's boss round here. It was a kind of macho thing, there's the sexism, the racism, all of that. I have a feeling that there are four of them who could be the main instigators.

Ray: Aine got me on the phone in Peckham and said get up here, and when I arrived in the cab I expected there to be a riot situation. When I got up the ramp I saw Aine there and I saw four of them scraping the door, so I said what's going on? And one of them said to me 'oh, we're removing some graffiti off the door for Aine'. I don't know what she'd said to them, but she'd got the four of them scraping it off straight away, by themselves. So I thought things ain't that bad if they've done that. They could just as easily have said 'look, fuck off, we're going' but they didn't. I think that shows how highly they rate the work she's doing.

Jackie: They were also approached by one of the women's partners who's black and he gave them a mouthful and they were really apologetic, like 'sorry, mate, we didn't realise it was your woman in there, we didn't mean it, it was a laugh'. The thing is they do know people round here.

Ray: If they were linked to organised fascists, they would have turned round and confronted them, they would have gone for them. That says to me that they wanted to do something but they didn't want to get caught doing it, they didn't really want a confrontational situation otherwise they would have done it. I mean they're quite big lads...

Aine: That's why I think they've actually moved quite a bit. Somebody could have been very seriously hurt, but I think they realised how important the detached project is to them and they were a bit hesitant...

Ray: So far from this group we've had positive, positive, positive and we've never really had one let-down. This is the first time.

Santi: In terms of the graffiti though, I think that if you're actually making some progress with those kids and some of their fundamental views are really being challenged, perhaps they're hanging on to what feels safe. It's a definite statement, because they could have written anything on the door, but they put BNP and NF and swastilas. It's like giving you something and then taking it back. Last week when we were watching that video of them and they were saying all the right things, we were so over the moon. So were they just saying what they thought you wanted to hear? That's a possibility too.

Aine: The actual young people who were on the video are genuine. I know they were genuine. Those young people were saying 'the project means a lot to us, it's made my brain bigger, we really like the project' – they were the ones who came and apologised to me on Monday evening, and they were the ones who were saying 'look, we had nothing to do with that'.

Team debriefing, November '94

Forward Planning

Consider these strategies for working effectively with young people on the streets.

- Can you list the practical steps you would need to take if you were setting up a detached youth work project from scratch?
- Can you develop an action plan or an approach to implementing each of the strategies listed?
    - Build up a committed team of workers who have a sound knowledge of racism and the local community.
    - Establish regular contacts with parents and other interested parties.
    - Provide activities that reflect the young people's interests.
    - Keep nightly records of encounters with young people on the streets.
    - Ensure that sessions are planned and properly debriefed.
    - Hold regular team reviews with training and structured inputs.
    - Continuously evaluate any successes or setbacks.
    - Prepare monthly reports of all activities and achievements as a means of monitoring progress.

- Encourage young people to question popular views on race, gender, sexuality and other controversial issues.
- Expose white young people to positive black role models.
- Build relationships with individuals.
- Establish clear boundaries.
- Isolate and work with ring-leaders.
- Demonstrate honesty, respect and consistency.

FURTHER READING

A Visible Presence – Black People Living and Working in Britain Today: An Annotated Anti-Racist Booklist for Young Adults, Teachers, Librarians and Community Workers, National Book League

Banal Nationalism, Michael Billig, Sage Publications, 1996

Challenging Racism, Valuing Difference: A Facilitators Guide, Tower Hamlets Learning Design Centre, 1994

How Racism Came to Britain, Institute of Race Relations, 1985

Not Easy Being British, Tariq Madood, Runnymede Trust with Sage Publications, 1992

Race in Britain Today, Richard Skellington and Maurice Paulette, Sage Publications, Second Edition, 1996

RaceTracks: A Resource Pack for Tackling Racism with Young People, Stella Dadzie, LB Greenwich, 1993

Racism and Discrimination in Britain: A Select Bibliography, Runnymede Trust (latest edition)

Racism – What's It Got to Do With Me?, British Youth Council, 1987

Roots of the Future: Ethnic Diversity in the Making of Britain, Commission for Racial Equality, 1996

Roots of the Future: An Education Pack for Exploring Ethnic Diversity on Britain, Youth Work Press, National Youth Agency, 1997

Routes of Racism: The Social Basis of Racist Action, Centre for Multicultural Education with LB Greenwich, 1996

Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain, Pluto Press, 1983

Tackling Racial Harassment: A Caseworkers Handbook, Commission for Racial Equality, 1995

Talking About Racism, Val Allport, Waltham Forest Multicultural Development Service, 1988

Teaching Against Racism: A Practical Handbook for Use With the 15 to 19 Age Range, Oxford Polytechnic Development Education Unit, 1986

When Hate Comes to Town: Community Responses to Racism and Fascism, Searchlight, 1995

Young & Equal: A Standard for Racial Equality in Services Working With Young People, Commission for Racial Equality, 1995

Blood, Sweat and Tears is the account of a three-year anti-racist detached youth work project in Bermondsey, which was established in 1993 with funding from the DfEE Youth Work Development Grants.

Against a background of widespread prejudice and an alarming increase in racially motivated attacks on black people in the area, the project worked closely with young people who were potential or actual perpetrators of racial violence.

The book traces the project's progress from its very first steps to the successes and setbacks that marked its second year and the final evaluation of outcomes.

It also contains training and discussion exercises which make it an invaluable resource for youth and community workers, teachers, youth work students and everybody involved in detached or anti-racist work with young people.

Stella Dadzie is a writer, historian and independent training consultant who specialises in race equality and anti-racist work. She is the co-author of *The Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain*, which is published by Virago, and has written a number of other publications, including *Racetracks: A Resource Pack for Tackling Racism with Young People.*

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